



Investigating the success strategies of women entrepreneurs in the Vaal Triangle

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ABSTRACT

The growing number of women entrepreneurs entering into the economic sector is one of the most significant social and economic developments globally. Women entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged as a precondition for sustainable economic growth and development in any country. There is however, very little known about women entrepreneurial activities, perceptions surrounding their entrepreneurial endeavours, including their business subsistence and growth strategies. This research study proposes to address this concern by interviewing 15 successful women entrepreneurs, specifically in the Vaal Triangle area.

Based on the Schumpeter's framework, the purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore strategies employed by women entrepreneurs in the Vaal Triangle to navigate towards business success beyond 3.5 years. The study explores the strategies women entrepreneurs use to overcome barriers to business and entrepreneurial intricacies. The study further uses practical theory to enquire into the strategies these women entrepreneurs recommend for new business start-ups and for women wanting to pursue their career in entrepreneurship.

Fifteen themes emerged from the phenomenological research methodology design. The themes include motivation, innovation, education, commitment, religion, business challenges, planning and research, customer focus, financial strategy, required resources, change and adapt, growth and sustainability, networking, gender roles and information sharing. The significance of these factors contributes to women entrepreneurial growth and sustainable business practice. The study follows a qualitative approach derived from the practical theory approach to investigate this phenomenon. This phenomenological study could in future influence women entrepreneurial success and provide information to support women owned businesses beyond the 3.5 years of business success.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs, barriers to women entrepreneurial growth, Vaal Triangle, success strategies of women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial practical theory.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BFAP:	Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy
BNI:	Business Network International
CSR:	Corporate Social Responsibility
DBSA:	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DTI:	Department of Trade and Industry
CIPRO:	Companies and Intellectual Property Commission
GEMS:	Global Entrepreneurship Monitoring Report
IDC:	Industrial Development Corporation
NWU:	North-West University
OECD:	Economic Co-operation and Development
SAWEN:	South African Women Network
SAWIC:	The South African Women in Construction
SME:	Small and Medium Sized Enterprise

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DECLARATION

The research project is performed as a requirement in partial fulfilment for the degree of Masters of Business Administration at the North-West University. The researcher hereby declares that this is original research and is my own work. The researcher further declares that the requirements of the North-West University have been met and the researcher obtained the necessary consent and authorisation from all stakeholders.

Adele Kloppers

20 November 2017

CHAPTER 1

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

“Women should feel empowered by the opportunity to disrupt. But to be successful they will require certain skills to overcome the business challenges associated with growing a company.” Isabelle Allen, 2015

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship in developing African countries continues to grow, while South Africa has to overcome various barriers to become recognised contributors to the Sub-Saharan African economy (IDC, 2017:6). South Africa faces numerous economic challenges, including poor growth prospects, tight fiscal conditions and high unemployment and poverty rates which leads to a growing number of demoralised job-seekers (Mandipaka, 2014:127). These challenges, along with a decline in formal employment opportunities, have led to an ever-growing need for self-employment and people are forced to improve their living standard through subsistence activities and entrepreneurial endeavours (Jiyane, Majanja, Mostert & Ocholla, 2013: 7).

The South African national policy promotes entrepreneurial growth (Mandipaka, 2014:127), and regard entrepreneurship as a mechanism for the country’s economic development because it addresses poverty through the creation of new businesses (Briere, Tremblay & Daou, 2015:713).

Entrepreneurial growth in South Africa is the critical driver of job creation and economic development (Oberholzer, Cullen & Adendorf, 2014:97). Nevertheless, if efforts to encourage and develop entrepreneurship are to materialise, we need to focus beyond survivalist initiatives, and invest in strategies to improve success factors in entrepreneurial ventures. These entrepreneurial contributions are expected to have the greatest influence, in terms of innovation, economic growth and wealth creation (SBP, 2013:1, 5).

Contributing to entrepreneurial growth in South Africa, women entrepreneurs are significant contributors to the South African economy (World Bank, 2016:5). Professor Brush, leader of women entrepreneurship at Babson College, describes the growing number of women entrepreneurs entering the economic sector, as one of the most significant social and economic developments globally (SBP, 2013:1).

Despite the growing number of women entrepreneurs, remarkably little is known about women's entrepreneurial endeavours, their subsistence and growth strategies (McClelland, Swail, Bell & Ibbotson, 2005:85). Malaza (2010:1) highlights the need for South African research on women entrepreneurial endeavours. This research study proposes to address this concern by interviewing 15 successful women entrepreneurs in the Vaal Triangle.

The study employs a transcendental phenomenological approach to "practical theories" from live story interpretations obtained from interviewing women entrepreneurs (Rae, 2004:195). The aim of the study is to obtain a better understanding of women entrepreneurship through practical entrepreneurial learning and the development of practical theory from these live stories.

This study involves collecting data from successful women entrepreneurs who had been in business in the Vaal Triangle for more than 3.5 years. The study investigates the successful strategies employed by these women entrepreneurs to navigate their way through business challenges, growth and sustainability. This study also explores their demographic profile, investigates their unique business characteristics, opportunities, and examines the unique barriers they faced in entrepreneurial growth.

1.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Schumpeter's theory of entrepreneurship provides the theoretical basis of this research study. According to Schumpeter's earlier theory in entrepreneurship (1934), Brockhaus (1982:39-56) identified elements of psychological characteristics such as "psychological influences on; personal characteristics of; and the effects of previous experience on the individual in predicting what makes a successful entrepreneur".

In an earlier study by Tripathi (2005:1), the author highlighted that Schumpeter regards a woman entrepreneur as an innovator, initiator and conclude: “women entrepreneurs are those women who initiate, organise and operate business enterprise and want to prove their mettle in innovative and competitive jobs. She also wants to oversee and control every aspect of her business for its overall success”.

In a more recent study, Loh and Dahesihsari (2013:4) highlight the Schumpeter’s theory regarding entrepreneurship as being intuitive and innovative, to perform activities without being over analytical, creative, inventive, and to have the ability to overcome self-doubt, to conquer uncertainty and manage unfavourable surroundings. In addition, the researchers identified certain psychological traits are evident to assist the entrepreneur to overcome challenges and uncertainty.

Cantner, Goethner and Silbereisen (2016:209) conclude and highlighted Schumpeter’s notion that entrepreneurship pertains to individuals who are energetic, who are initiators, who are able to adapt to change, overcome scepticism and challenge “social resistance”. Should one perceive entrepreneurs in this context, valuable practical theory may emerge from interviewing the entrepreneurs (Spencer, 2016:2; Rae, 2004:196).

The following section provides definitions to clarify the research constructs. The preceding paragraphs will explain the problem statement, the primary and secondary objectives and includes the scope of the study. The scope of the study consists of the field of study and the geographical demarcation of research.

1.3 DEFINITIONS

The following section provides definitions to clarify entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurship, and small to medium enterprise, successful businesses and practical theory as a resource in entrepreneurial education. The researcher will refer to the above terms as contained within these documented definitions.

1.3.1 Defining entrepreneurship

The term entrepreneur originated from the French verb ‘entreprendre’ during the 17th century (Shodganga, 2017:2), and relates to an individual who “undertakes” or “go-between”, and takes the risk associated to new venture start-ups (Freit, 2013:1). Spenser (2016:3) regards an entrepreneur as an individual who creates value through their entrepreneurial endeavours, an individual who identifies opportunities, act thereon and follow an innovative approach to conducting business and discovering unexplored markets.

1.3.2 Defining women entrepreneurship

According to McClelland *et al.* (2005:87), women entrepreneurship can be defined as “women owned business”, holding at least 51% shares by one or more women, or in the event of widely held business, owns at least 51% shares and also manages everyday business operations.

Anwar and Rashid (2012:8) highlight the definition used by Farr-Wharton and Brunetto (2009:2) of a woman entrepreneur: “Female entrepreneurs are defined as those who use their knowledge and resources to develop or create new business opportunities, who are actively involved in managing their businesses, and own at least 50 per cent of the business and have been in operation for longer than a year”.

1.3.3 Defining Small and Medium Sized Enterprise (SME)

The South African National Small Business Act (1996), the National Small Business Amendment Act (2004:2) defines SME as registered businesses, having less than 200 employees, with an annual turnover depending on the different industries. The researcher provides a detailed schedule of the classifications in Annexure C.

1.3.4 Successful businesses

For the purpose of the study, successful women businesses are regarded as being in existence for more than 3.5 years (Van der Zwan, Verheul & Thurik, 2012:630). Spenser (2016:3)

supports the finding and regards a business start-up and sustaining itself beyond a 3.5-year period, as a successful business enterprise.

1.3.5 Practical theory

According to David Rae (2004:196), the term “*practical theory*” refers to “*what we do*” and effective practitioners ask “*what works for me*” and through reflecting, making sense of their experiences. They then develop “practical theories” to describe “*what works*” and “*why it works*”. He further explained that these theories translate into decision-making, dealing with intermittent events, problem solving and the practices of relationship management (Rae, 2004:196).

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

While women entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged as a precondition for sustainable economic growth and development (Oberholzer *et al.*, 2014:97; Botha, 2006:115), there is little known about women entrepreneurial activities, perceptions surrounding their entrepreneurial endeavours, including their business subsistence and growth strategies (McClelland *et al.*, 2005:85).

Statistics South-Africa revealed women make up more than 50% of the South African population (SA Stats, 2017), however, they are under-represented in South Africa. According to the 2016/17 Global Entrepreneurship Monitoring Report (GEM), a higher ratio of male participation in early-stage entrepreneurial activity is reported in South Africa, in comparison to their female counterparts (Herrington, Kew & Mwanga, 2016:32).

The GEM report further indicates that men’s involvement in the entrepreneurial activity rate is higher than female participation (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:32). Although women entrepreneurship is a growing phenomenon (Nieman & Nieuwenhuizen, 2009:37), women entrepreneurs still seem to be under-represented in the developing formal sector (Botha, 2006:187).

Evidence from previous studies indicated that women also face greater difficulties in becoming entrepreneurs (Mandipaka, 2014:1188). These difficulties include: high domestic responsibility (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:32; William & Gurtoo, 2011:360); lower levels of education (Mandipaka, 2014:1188); the absence of female role models (Mattis, 2004:154); less networking opportunities and a lack of capital and tangible resources (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:32).

The GEM report identified other difficulties such as inferior status in society; lack of self-assurance and self-doubt to engage in viable and successful business (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:32). These factors are unique challenges women entrepreneurs encounter and may contribute and prevent women from recognising, as well as engaging in entrepreneurial opportunities (Mandipaka, 2014:1118).

Furthermore, a major problem in South Africa is the lack of empirical studies on women entrepreneurs' contribution to the South African economy and limited studies relating to the general profile of women entrepreneurs in South Africa (DTI, 2005:3).

This study therefore, proposes to investigate women entrepreneurship in South Africa through practical theory, which in return will assist in providing guidelines for entrepreneurial development. The study aims to share experiences of successful women entrepreneurs and to contribute to literature within a qualitative research setting.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives are divided into primary and secondary objectives. The secondary objectives are supportive to the primary objectives. The primary objectives consist of two research objectives with seven secondary objectives pertaining to successful SME's women entrepreneurs.

1.5.1 Primary objectives

In formulating the research objectives in a phenomenological study, it is important to consider the personal and social significance of the research study (Spencer, 2016:2). The primary objective of this study consists of two research objectives.

The first research objective seeks to explore women entrepreneurship in South Africa, with specific focus on the strategies employed by women entrepreneurs for business growth and sustainability through a long phenomenological interview.

The primary research question for the first part of the study was as follows:

Research Question 1: Which strategies do Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs employ to navigate themselves to business success beyond 3.5 years?

The second research objective is to investigate practical theory as a form of entrepreneurial learning, with specific focus on women entrepreneurship. The practical theory will be obtained through in-depth interviews with successful women entrepreneurs.

The primary research question for the second part of the study was as follows:

Research Question 2: How can qualitative practical theory contribute to women entrepreneurial learning and development?

1.5.2 Secondary objectives

In order to deal with the primary objectives, the following secondary objectives must be addressed and include the following:

- To obtain a general profile of successful women entrepreneurs through the literature review.

- To analyse entrepreneurial characteristics of successful SME's women entrepreneurs with their unique business characteristics, with specific focus on women trading in the Vaal Triangle area.
- To investigate the challenges facing the women entrepreneurs and the strategies they used to overcome these challenges.
- To gather information on how to interview successful women entrepreneurs, with the purpose of building a framework of strategies to respond to barriers of entrepreneurial and business growth.
- To determine whether qualitative in-depth interviews will contribute to women entrepreneurial learning and development.
- To make suggestions to enhance women entrepreneurship in South Africa.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study is divided into two parts, namely the field of the study and the geographical demarcation of the study.

1.6.1 Field of the study

The field of the study falls in the subject discipline of entrepreneurship with particular focus on women entrepreneurship.

1.6.2 Geographic demarcation

The empirical study on women entrepreneurs will be conducted in the Southern region of the Gauteng province in South Africa, in the Vaal Triangle also known as the Sedibeng District Municipality.

The cities of Vereeniging, Vanderbijlpark and Sasolburg are the three cornerstones of the Vaal Triangle. During the late twentieth century, the Vaal Triangle was recognised as an industrial hub of South Africa. The Vaal Triangle also attracts tourists due to settlements and resorts in close proximity to the Vaal Dam and Vaal River. Most of these settlements and resorts are situated in the Sedibeng District Municipality, of which the Emfuleni district is regarded the largest municipality (www.vaaltriangleinfo.co.za).

Figure 1.1 illustrates the Vaal Triangle area.

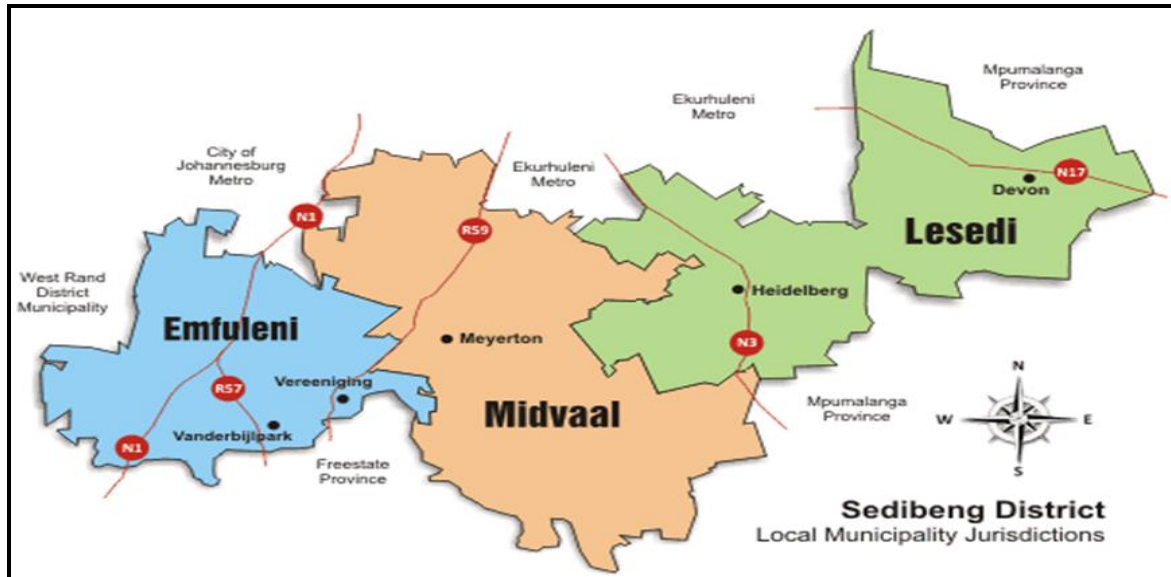
Figure 1.1: Map of the Vaal Triangle



Source: www.vaaltriangleinfo.co.za

The Emfuleni district is regarded as one of the largest of the three Sedibeng local municipalities, with a recorded population of 733,445 in 2016 (2011:721,663), with an average unemployment rate of 35 % in 2011, and unemployed youth at 45 % (2016 figures not available) (www.emfuleni.gov.za). Figure 1.2 outlines the geographical location of the towns in the Emfuleni District.

Figure 1.2: Map of the Emfuleni District



Source: www.sedibeng.gov.za

The Emfuleni district includes Vanderbijlpark, Vereeniging, Evaton, Boipatong, Bobhelong and Sebokeng settlements. It is in the centre of large mining and metal industries and includes establishments such as Sasol, Arcelor Mittal and Samancor. These industries provide ample business opportunities to entrepreneurs (Pelupessy & Slabbert, 2001:36). Surrounding Municipalities include the Midvaal Local Municipality, Johannesburg Metropolitan and Westonaria in Gauteng; Metsimaholo Local Municipality in the Free State and Potchefstroom Local Municipalities in the North West Province (Sedibeng Integrated Development Plan, 2010:15).

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study follows a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the strategies of successful women entrepreneurs who navigated themselves through barriers of entrepreneurial and business growth, beyond 3.5 years. This section comprises of two phases: the literature review and the empirical study.

In the first phase, the researcher used a literature study to investigate entrepreneurship, the Schumpeter's conceptual framework of an entrepreneur and women entrepreneurship in terms of their profile, the challenges they experienced and the strategies they employ to engage in viable business practises that aims for growth and or sustainability.

In the second phase, the empirical study, the researcher explored the personal and business characteristics of successful Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs, investigated the factors that contributed to their success; the challenges and the strategies they employ for growth and entrepreneurial success.

This research study follows a qualitative phenomenological approach in the form of long, in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The following section provides the strategies followed for both the literature review and the empirical study.

1.7.1 Literature review

The literature review provided an academic view of the distinctive characteristics found in women entrepreneurs and provided an academic overview of previous research on this topic, following a "goal-directed method" (Bryman, Bell & Hirschsohn, 2015:92).

The literature review focused on literature sources such as published journal articles, scholarly books and website articles. In the search for literature, the researcher considered the following questions to perform the literature review:

- Information already available on the characteristics of successful women entrepreneurs?
- Which concepts and entrepreneurial theories are relevant to women entrepreneurship?
- Which strategies and research methods were employed to explore these phenomena?
- What are the debates surrounding women entrepreneurship, worthy to explore?
- Are there any inconsistencies or contradictions in the research findings that can be further explored?

- Are there any unanswered questions relating to women entrepreneurship?

Source: Adapted from Bryman *et al.* (2015:93)

The researcher used the following key words: entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs, barriers to women entrepreneurial growth, Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs, success strategies of women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial practical theory. The researcher evaluated more than 150 sources, of which 148 were used as references in the study.

It is significant to note that the researcher, after the literature review, was required to revisit the review after interviews were conducted because some of the outcomes contradicted some of the previous studies performed on the women entrepreneurs. The literature review was continuously revisited and the researcher discussed and documented these contradictions in Chapter 4.

1.7.2 The empirical study

1.6.2.1 Purpose statement

The study followed a transcendental phenomenological approach to explore the strategies used by 15 successful women entrepreneurs in developing viable businesses that aim for growth and sustainability. Spencer (2016:2) recommends a transcendental qualitative phenomenological study design to understand how entrepreneurs overcome barriers to building successful businesses.

The phenomenological study design can serve as a powerful vehicle for the researcher to explore how entrepreneurs perceive and interpret conventional theoretical notions such as “risks and opportunities” (Berglund, 2007:76).

Face-to-face interviews serve as a meaningful tool to gain insight and to comprehend the significance of the subject that is important to the research study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:138). The researcher made use of face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with successful Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs to obtain an understanding of the experiences of these women entrepreneurs, who engaged in successful businesses for more than 3.5 years.

Van der Zwan *et al.* (2012:630) regard women businesses as successful when they have been in existence for more than 3.5 years. The experiences of successful women entrepreneurs engaging in successful business beyond the 3.5 years may provide valuable information, which can support the development of a women entrepreneurial culture (Emrich, 2015:13).

A woman enterprising culture creates a platform, where innovative entrepreneurs can operate and share experiences, which contribute to entrepreneurial growth (Emrich, 2015:44). This culture of sharing experiences is considered valuable for society (Lerner, Brush & Hisrich, 1997:315-317).

Spenser (2016:2) supports this finding and in addition highlights that an entrepreneurial culture is fundamental in encouraging social change that provides a new direction for potential entrepreneurs to launch new capital ventures, the creation and development of new job creation opportunities, and the improvement of socio-economic conditions for entrepreneurs to engage in successful businesses.

1.6.2.2 The role of the researcher

The role of the researcher in this qualitative study is to serve as the primary instrument for collecting data (Foster, 2016:46), while adhering strictly to the North West University's (NWU) ethical guidelines (NWU, 2010:48).

The researcher conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the 15 selected women entrepreneurs, with the assistance of a questionnaire comprising of open-ended questions as recommended by Emrich (2015:57), on investigating the women entrepreneurial phenomena.

The responses were collected, analysed and are presented in chapter three. Furthermore, my role as researcher was to follow an ethical approach; and safeguard the identities of these women participants (Foster, 2016:46). The role of the researcher was also to ensure the avoidance of any biases, by "bracketing" (Groenewald, 2004:12); and honestly investigating the topic of women entrepreneurial phenomenon.

The process of “bracketing” involves the separation of the researcher’s own personal perceptions, knowledge and experiences, morals and beliefs from the data researched, which are typically founded in a phenomenological orientation. “Bracketing” uses a mind-mapping technique, where the researcher suppresses her views on the entrepreneurial process - in this research, the Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurial endeavours (Spenser, 2016:9).

Thomas Groenewald (2004:12) conducted a phenomenological study where he used two types of bracketing techniques. The researcher first focused on “what goes on within” the research participants, and encourage the participants to “describe the lived experience in a language as free from the constructs of the intellect and society as possible”. Groenewald (2004) thereafter used a second bracketing technique, and highlights the researcher ‘brackets’ his/her own biases and move into the person’s own world, thereby interpreting the information as an experienced translator.

The researcher used a journal to document field notes. This journaling assisted the researcher with the interview processes by outlining of the documented experiences as recommended by Spenser (2016:9), of the women entrepreneurs and the methods they followed. This journal contained field notes as recommended by Groenewald (2004:15) to ensure any biases are eliminated and to ensure that the researcher focused on the woman participant, reporting her views and experiences accurately.

The researcher used four types of field notes as recommended by Groenewald (2004:15):

1. *Observational notes (ON)* — ‘*what happened notes*’ are deemed important enough to the researcher to make, with emphasis on the use of all the senses in making observations.
2. *Theoretical notes (TN)* — ‘*attempts to derive meaning*’ as the researcher thinks or reflects on experiences.
3. *Methodological notes (MN)* — ‘*reminders, instructions or critique*’ to oneself on the process.
4. *Analytical memos (AM)* — *end-of-a-field-day summary or progress reviews*.

Source: Quote from Groenewald (2004:15)

Spenser further explains that journaling provides a means of eliminating personal biases and ensure attention is given to the participant's in-depth explanation of occurrences and to assist in construction of the participants perspectives (Spenser, 2016:9).

The researcher adhered to the ethical principles and guidelines provided by the NWU. The NWU provides an ethical guideline that place significance on the objectiveness in the selection of research participants, respect to individuals, addressing risk factors and obtaining informed consent (NWU,2010:48).

The researcher ensured that all ethical principles were met. The researcher did not target vulnerable individuals and did not harm or threat participants in this research study. The researcher ensured that, before conducting the study, the women participants gave permission and was recorded electronically, before the interview was conducted. The interview procedure included provision of the interview questionnaire beforehand to prepare the participants on possible interview questions, including the consent to record, as this is fundamental to the interview process (Emrich, 2015:68). The researcher further used an interview protocol with the objective to guide a thorough and expressive interview; the protocol furthermore, provided the researcher with guidelines to ethical conduct and ensured appropriate data is collected (Emrich, 2015:142).

1.6.2.3 Participants

The researcher first selected 13 Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs who were in business for more than 3.5 years. This was confirmed in the interview and by verifying registrations on the CIPRO database. Spenser (2016:2) recommends the researcher should verify the business registration and age to a recognised business registration database. The researcher thereafter interviewed two additional participants to ensure data saturation points were researched, which resulted in a final population of 15 women participants. The data saturation point is when no new or additional themes emerge from the data and it is not considered feasible for the researcher to perform additional interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1408). Fusch and Ness (2015:1408) highlighted the negative impact on "content validity" and the quality of the research study, should the researcher not attain data saturation point.

The researcher started the study with her own personal contacts with women entrepreneurs to facilitate the selection process. Some of these women then made referrals to other successful women-owned businesses, resulting in a snowballing effect. Atkinson and Flint (2001:1) regard the snowball sampling technique as a method to find research participants, where one participant provides a name of the second and the second participant provides a name of a third and the referral process continues.

Atkinson and Flint (2001:4) state that the snowball sampling technique provides the researcher with a valuable tool to find research participants, which the researcher normally would not find, and which often lay outside their “social reach.” The researcher contacted each participant by phone or face-to-face interaction to discuss the purpose of the interviews and to ask the participant’s permission to record the interview (Emrich, 2015:68), and in return ensured their confidentiality will be safeguarded. The researcher expected the interviews would take approximately 1-2 hours, due to the probing and exploratory nature of the interview questions.

The researcher made appointments with the women entrepreneurs and conducted the interviews on their respective business premises, selecting settings where the participants felt comfortable and using face-to-face communication (Gerring, 2007:49).

The women entrepreneurs in the Vaal Triangle were open and excited to participate in the research study and also suggested and introduced the researcher to other women entrepreneurs for the study.

1.6.2.4 The research method and design

The study followed a qualitative phenomenological approach (1) to investigate the strategies of women entrepreneurs in the Vaal Triangle to engage in viable business practices with the aim of growth and or sustainability; and (2) the strategies they employ to overcome difficulties relating to growth and sustainability within their respective businesses. The researcher also investigated how qualitative practical theory contributes to women entrepreneurial learning and development as recommended by David Rae (2004:196).

A suitable instrument for use in the study was the qualitative phenomenological design, which involved exploring the way in which Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs overcame barriers to entrepreneurial success. Spencer (2016:2) recommends this research study design to understand how entrepreneurs overcome barriers to building successful businesses.

Given that the South African women entrepreneurial growth lags behind male entrepreneurial growth (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:32), the phenomenological study involved the investigation of the success strategies Vaal Triangle based women entrepreneurs followed to ensure viable and sustainable business practise. The study applies a phenomenological qualitative research design that involves investigating the mutual denominators between participants within a collective location (Spenser, 2016:10). Van Manen (1997:41) provides a comprehensive explanation to phenomenology and state the following:

“[Phenomena] have something to say to us — this is common knowledge among poets and painters. Therefore, poets and painters are born phenomenologists. Or rather, we are all born phenomenologists; the poets and painters among us, however, understand very well their task of sharing, by means of word and image, their insights with others — an artfulness that is also laboriously practised by the professional phenomenologist.”

The Grounded Theory methodology also influenced the research outcomes; Grounded Theory method however requires existing theory in order to ensure the objectives of the research have been met (Sabdia, 2014:4). Sabdia (2014:4) conducted a study on entrepreneurship and the “*effectuation as a construct for new business formation in South Africa*” which revealed similar results where the author also required existing data to support the research study outcomes.

The researcher used thematic analyses recommended by Bryman *et al.* (2015:350) to analyse the data with the purpose of addressing the proposed research questions. The researcher collected the data, which provided insight into the phenomena and was compared to the Schumpeter’s conceptual framework (Spenser, 2016:2). The interviews enabled the researcher to derive themes, make inferences and provide conclusions (Bryman *et al.*, 2015:350).

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs regarding their success strategies to build successful businesses, and to

overcome barriers to entrepreneurial and business success. The findings could in future assist other women entrepreneurs with a similar outlook (Foster, 2016:83).

1.6.2.5 Research method

The researcher applied a qualitative research method, which involved intricate human communication, conceptual philosophies and subjectivity, to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in the field of anthropology, sociology, psychology and business studies as suggested by Spenser (2016:10).

Schurink (2003:9-10) regards the qualitative method appropriate for an intricate research problem with new and unfamiliar variables. Spenser (2016:10) recommends using the qualitative research design, as the method employs different sources of qualitative data and consists of semi-structured interviews, observations and library collected documents, rather than following a quantitative approach using scientific, standardised measuring instruments and experimental methods used in quantitative studies. The qualitative method is deemed appropriate to explore the participants' perceptions and experiences related to the main theme. The researcher reviewed the differences concerning quantitative and qualitative research methods as discussed by Bryman *et al.* (2015:61) and thereby determined that the qualitative method was more appropriate for the purpose of this study. Quantitative research typical relates to the gathering of numerical data and testing relations between different variables. The main elements in quantitative studies are predetermined variables, propensity analysis, with relationships serving as the basis for the finding knowledge (Bryman *et al.*, 2015:31).

The quantitative research design tests hypotheses through predefined questions that tests and determines group and intergroup comparisons, makes inference between variables by applying the correct measurement through numeric data. According to the observations by Spenser (2016:10), the quantitative method would not be appropriate to obtain detailed and in-depth discussions for this phenomenological study and the qualitative method will be more appropriate to address primary and secondary objectives in the study.

The mixed method study design integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to the research study, using transcript and numerical data (Bryman *et al.*, 2015:57). The researcher considered a mixed method design, which is a more all-inclusive method of applying

qualitative and quantitative procedures, Emrich (2015:63) however, recommends that due to time constraints researchers often do not to select the mixed method. The researcher selected not to choose the mixed method study design.

1.6.2.6 Research design

The researcher used a phenomenological design to explore the Vaal Triangle women's entrepreneurial experiences and perceptions who engaged in successful business entrepreneurship for more than 3.5 years. Van der Zwan *et al.* (2012:630) regard women-owned businesses as successful when they have been in existence for more than 3.5 years.

The Vaal Triangle is appropriate for the phenomenological criteria and suitable to explore the experiences and perceptions of successful Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs, as these women navigate themselves through the barriers of entrepreneurial and business growth. The phenomenological method includes and considers concerns, which others methods may ignore, regard as customary, neglect or fail to discover (Spenser, 2016:10). The method is appropriate to explore deeper into the issues that Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs experience, and to identify barriers to entrepreneurial and business success. The researcher selected not to follow ethnography theory design, as the study focussed only on the Vaal Triangle's women entrepreneurial lived experiences. The Ethnographic design is appropriate to observe a total culture within a community; with focus on the structure, the nature and preservation of the culture (Bryman *et al.*, 2015:42). Spenser (2016:10) recommends not using the ethnographic method as the method employs several data collection methods to comprehend total cultural experiences and behaviour and was therefore deemed inappropriate for this study.

The researcher selected not to use the grounded theory design, as the design relates to the investigation of social procedures and actions of the individual's interactions in different situations where emerging theory are formed from the data collected (Emrich, 2015:64). The Grounded Theory methodology, however greatly influenced the research study. The researcher considered using the grounded theory in this qualitative research, however required existing data to support research objectives (Sabdia, 2014:4).

The researcher therefore used the phenomenological design to explore the women's personal and business background, their perceptions relating to women entrepreneurial activities with lived experiences, and include the entrepreneurial strategies they employ to engage successful business practises as recommended by Spencer (2016:2). The research intent, however, was to examine the unique strategies these women employ for business growth and or sustainability; how they overcome barriers in entrepreneurial and business growth, within their respective businesses. The researcher first performed in-depth investigations into women entrepreneurship through a literature review (Bryman *et al.*, 2015:98), thereafter drafted potential interview questions and performed the pilot study, using three knowledgeable, experienced women entrepreneurs (Bazeley, 2013:55).

1.6.2.7 Population and sampling

The target population for this study was 15 Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs with small to medium businesses, who were able to navigate success strategies to engage in viable (> 3.5 years old) businesses aiming at growth and or sustainability. Groenewald (2004:11) suggests the researchers select 10 research participants to reach data saturation point and an earlier study by Creswell (1998:65,113) also found 10 research participants sufficient for a phenomenological study. The researcher considered interviewing 5 additional women entrepreneurs to ensure no new theme and data emerged.

The researcher used a purposive, non-probability sampling method to ensure participants met the 3.5 year criteria requirement. The use of probability sampling is more appropriate in quantitative research studies where researchers test proposed hypothesis and generalise outcome over the population, and was therefore not considered in this study (Beitin, 2012:248).

The researcher followed the purposive sampling approach, which is a non-probability method, used when participants have knowledge and experience, with expertise to provide an understanding of the phenomenon. A purposive sampling approach was appropriate for the study to ensure the researcher aligned the participants with the primary research question (Beitin, 2012:248).

The women, selected for the study, have the knowledge, skill, and expertise to provide an extensive understanding of women entrepreneurs as discussed by Fortuin (2016:4), in the Vaal Triangle area. The research sample snowballed when these candidates suggested more successful women entrepreneurs who they knew who also met the specific sampling criteria. The researcher used a phenomenological semi-constructed interview and added additional questions as the interview unfolded. A sample size of 15 women entrepreneurs were selected to ensure data saturation was reached. The research study will reach data saturation point when no new themes emerge (Spenser, 2016:10). When the saturation point is reached, the researcher will conclude the interview after two additional interviews.

1.6.2.8 Data collection instruments

The researcher in this qualitative research study will be the primary data collection instrument due to the qualitative nature of the study. The approach to collect data for this research included in-depth semi-structured interviews with successful entrepreneurial women (Foster, 2016:46). The face-to-face interviews were recorded on a digital device after the participants gave consent (Emrich, 2015:57).

The phenomenological interview, with a number of pre-determined open-ended questions, prompted the participants in sharing their experiences through narratives. The researcher added additional probing questions to explore in-depth perceptions and personal experiences (Fortuin, 2016:4; Beitin 2012:250). The data was verified through review of the transcript and included participant checking (Spenser, 2016:11). Emrich (2015:68) suggests the researcher use a broad number of interview questions with an interview protocol that supports the phenomenological interview design. This process allows the researcher to explore new and emerging themes. The researcher followed this interview protocol and contacted participants for a suitable time to meet. The meeting started by the researcher introducing herself, expressing her appreciation for their participation to the study, obtaining consent to record and taking notes and explaining the aim of the study.

The researcher informed each participant that the information obtained from the interview was confidential and her identity will be protected. The researcher thereafter began with discussions by using the open-ended questions as guideline. These questions were followed by propping questions to ensure participants responses were clearly understood and to avoid

own biases (Foster, 2016:46). The conversation was recorded and field notes were made in a journal (Groenewald, 2004:15). In contrast to performing a structured interview, the phenomenological interview is not restricted to a pre-set list of questions. Instead, this method permit the participants to converse and raise matters not identified during the formulation of the research questions (Spencer, 2016:11).

1.6.2.9 Research questions

The researcher considered the individual significance and social importance within the phenomenological study when formulating the research questions as suggested by Spenser (2016:2) and Groenewald (2004:20). The researcher considered the primary objectives that filtered into two research questions.

Research Question 1: Which strategies do Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs employee to navigate themselves to business success beyond 3.5 years?

Research Question 2: How can qualitative practical theory contribute to women entrepreneurial learning and development?

The research questions that support the two research questions are as follows:

Questions relating to their business strategies

- Do you want your business to grow and/or sustain your business?
- Do you have business strategy to pursue the growth and sustainability within your business?
- Do you have a financial strategy to pursue growth and sustainability within your business?
- What resources to you require growing and sustaining your business?
- What are the major difficulties you currently face in your business?
- What strategies do you use to overcome the difficulties?
- Do you feel other women entrepreneurs have the same difficulties?
- What advice can you give to other women-owned business who wants to grow and sustain her businesses?

Questions relating to women entrepreneurial features

- Do you think more women are becoming entrepreneurs? Why?
- What do you think are the major challenges for women becoming entrepreneurs?
- Do you think it is more challenging for a woman than a man, if so please explain?
- What difficulties did you experience as a woman entrepreneur? And still experience?
- Were you ever part of an entrepreneurial development program to enhance your entrepreneurial skills?
- Have you considered attending a program for the development of your entrepreneurial skills?
- Do you know of any institutions that provide programs for the development of women entrepreneurial skills?
- Which advice can you give to women wanting to become entrepreneurs?
- Do you feel that interviewing women entrepreneurs can contribute to women entrepreneurial learning and development?

1.6.2.10 Data collection technique

The collection of data during the interviews enabled the exploration of various features (Fortuin, 2016:4) of entrepreneurial experiences, with specific focus on women entrepreneurship. The interviews were conducted in Afrikaans and English, depending on the language of the participant and recorded on a digital device. The interviews were then transcribed by converting verbal communication into a written format (Spenser, 2016:11). The interview took place in the participant's respective business location and took approximately one to two hours to complete. The interview time also depended on the participant's time constraint. The researcher contacted each participant, indicated the purpose for the call, provided an outline of the study objectives and confirmed the appointment.

The data collection process was firstly conducted through a pilot study to address methodological concerns; and determine whether questions are relevant and acceptable to achieve the phenomenological research objectives (Fortuin, 2016:34). Each of the participants was asked whether she feels that the interview questions were sufficient and relevant to study the field of women entrepreneurship. The pilot study consisted of three participants, whose responses were transcribed and reviewed by the participant to ensure the interviewer correctly

interpreted the responses; ensuring that the research methods address research questions and research methods were correct (Bryman *et al.*, 2015:91). The pilot study assisted the researcher in selecting relevant questions; obtain suggestions for meaningful questions and advice on enhancing and improving the interview (Fortuin, 2016:34).

The participant reviewing process assisted the researcher in determining whether the findings were grounded and reasonable, and whether new themes discovered and documented were accurate and complete. A copy of the interview transcript was given to the participant for review to validate the accuracy of the transcribed responses. The researcher then shared the data analysis with the participant to ensure that the researcher did not interpret data according to her own experience, thereby also ensuring reliability and the credibility of the study (Groenewald, 2004:20).

1.6.2.11 Data organisation technique

The researcher allocated an alphanumeric code to the individual interview responses (P01-P15), and did not necessary keep to the chronological order of the questionnaire. The researcher removed the name from the participant list once the interview was completed. The researcher found that in some cases it was necessary for a second contact with the participant for clarification of certain aspects. The researcher revisited the recorded interviews at least three times to determine similar themes. The researcher used the recommendation by Spenser (2016:11) and used Microsoft Excel to categorise the themes.

The researcher allocated the themes into categories such as personal and business characteristics, barriers to business growth; success strategies to business growth and sustainability; and success strategies to overcome barriers to entrepreneurial and business success.

The researcher revisited the data and considered the purpose of the phenomenological design and ensured valuable information did not get lost in the process. Groenewald (2004:17) recommends using his simplified Hycner's (1999) "explicitation" process to analyse the data to ensure valuable information do not get lost within this phase of the analysis, as discussed under section 1.6.12.

1.6.2.12 Explication of the data

Groenewald recommends that the researcher should avoid using the heading ‘data analysis’ and cautions that the word ‘analysis’ in a phenomenology study is risky. The researcher explained that the term “analysis means a breaking into parts” might pose the risk of losing the full phenomenon under the given circumstance and recommend rather using the term “explication” (Groenewald, 2004:16). Coffey and Atkinson (1996:9) further refer to this analysis as the “systematic procedures to identify essential features and relationships”. The researcher used this method to transform the data for their own interpretation (Groenewald, 2004:16).

Groenewald (2004:16-17) simplified the Hycner’s (1999) the “explication” process recommends the following five phases:

1. *Bracketing and phenomenological reduction.*
2. *Delineating units of meaning.*
3. *Clustering of units of meaning to form themes.*
4. *Summarising each interview, validating it and where necessary modifying it.*
5. *Extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary.*

Source: Quotation from Groenewald (2004:16-17)

The researcher, in addition to using the recommendation made by Groenewald (2004:16), used a computer aided software program Atlas ti (version 8) for Windows, which was designed for qualitative analysis (Bryman *et al.*, 2015:301). The software program, Atlas.ti.8, supported the organisation and analysis of data obtained in the interview. Atlas.ti.8 provided the researcher with sophisticated tools to assist in the systematic arrangement, management and reconstruction of the data in an innovative way, however still following a systematic approach (www.Atlasti.com), and considering the explication process of the data.

Groenewald cautions researchers that ‘breaking the data into parts’ may pose the risk of losing the full phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004:16). The researcher therefore documented some of the participant’s responses, which she considered significant to the findings of the

empirical research. The responses are referenced by assigning the letter P (participant) and numerical code (1) in sequence of the interviews. Example: P03 – represents Participant 3.

The Atlas software program assisted the researcher to remain focused on the underlying themes and to comprehend the outcomes of the interviews as a whole. The interviews were transcribed in a Microsoft Word document and thereafter imported into the Atlas.ti.8, software program, the program generated a word cloud with a frequency count and the researcher exported the list of words (codes) in Excel, where the researcher determined emerging themes and codes (Spenser, 2016:11).

The program assisted the researcher in formulating codes, allocating references to the codes and assigning the codes to the different data groups. The research thereafter provided a detailed discussion on the generated codes, data segmentation and the results obtained.

The researcher subsequently provided a discussion on the findings according to the identified themes. The researcher revisited the transcribed interviews to ensure no significant data got lost in the process. This necessitated the researcher to quote some of the participants' responses, as documented in chapter 3.

The following section relates to the development of emerging themes.

1.6.2.13 Thematic data explicitation

The researcher searched for themes through the thematic analysis approach, which can assist in various philosophical research approaches (Bryman *et al.*, 2015:350). Thematic analysis is similar to that of a content analysis, however is more appropriate to investigate the meaning within a given situation (Bryman *et al.*, 2015:350). In contrast to grounded theory, this analytical technique does not have a specific group of approaches and methods to follow (Braun & Clark 2006:87). When a theme emerged from the thematic analysis, it did not necessarily mean that the theme supported the research objectives, however it required the researcher's judgement in determining whether the theme is important and relevant to the research study (Bryman *et al.*, 2015:350).

The researcher determined whether the theme related to the research questions and how it captured the meaning within the context of the research intent. After the researcher transcribed the responses on a Microsoft Word document, she imported it into Atlas and from there into an Excel spreadsheet to assist in summarising the data and to identify prominent and important emerging themes. Thereafter she compared it to the research questions to ensure research objectives have been met.

The researcher used the 6-phase process recommended by Bryman *et al.* (2015:351) and Braun and Clarke (2006:87).

1. In phase 1, the researcher firstly requires familiarisation of the data collected. In this phase, the researcher transcribes the data and afterwards read and re-read the transcribed data. The researcher subsequently documents and notes down original ideas.
2. In phase 2, the researcher is required to generate the initial codes. In this phase, the researcher systematically codes interesting characteristics of the data by allocating and marking significant data to the individual codes.
3. In phase 3, the researcher search for themes. In this phase, the researcher organises codes into possible themes and thereafter collects all the relevant data pertaining to the possible themes.
4. In Phase 4, the researcher reviews the themes. This process assists the researcher in checking whether the themes and generated codes work in relation to each other. This allows the researcher to generate a “thematic map” during the data analysis.
5. In Phase 5, the researcher defines and name the themes identified. This phase pertains to a continual analysis where the researcher refines, generates and allocates definitions to specific themes. This process allows the researcher to develop a storyline out of the analysis.
6. The last phase 6, the researcher generates a report of the findings. This is the final phase of the analysis. Here the researcher needs to integrate the findings back to the

researchers literature review, the research questions and to present findings and results of the analysis.

The following section addresses the contribution of the research study.

1.8 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs regarding their success strategies to build successful businesses. The findings could assist other women entrepreneurs with a similar outlook and create a woman entrepreneurial culture that will address the need for transition and social change. The characteristics of a women enterprising culture is innovative and provides a platform in which women entrepreneurs can operate and share experiences that can contribute to women entrepreneurial growth (Emrich, 2015:13; Foster, 2016:83).

The entrepreneurial culture for both women and men are fundamental in encouraging social change that can provide a new direction for potential women entrepreneurs to launch new capital ventures, the creation and development of new job opportunities and the improvement of socio-economic conditions for women entrepreneurs to engage in successful businesses (Spencer, 2016:2).

Literature provides limited research on the success strategies women entrepreneurs employ and little is therefore known about women entrepreneurial activities, perception surrounding their entrepreneurial endeavours, including their business subsistence and growth strategies (McClelland *et al.*, 2005:85).

This research study not only explored the personal profiles or the barriers to women entrepreneurship, but also investigated strategies women use to navigate the business to sustainability and growth within the businesses. The researcher used a phenomenological study design, which serves as a powerful vehicle for the researcher to explore how entrepreneurs perceive and interpret conventional theoretical notions such as “risks and opportunities” (Berglund, 2007:76).

The phenomenological method includes and considers concerns, which other methods may ignore, regard as customary, neglect or fail to discover. The research considered this method, in contrast to quantitative research, in order to investigate deeper issues entrepreneurs experience, and to identify barriers to entrepreneurial and business success (Spencer, 2016:2; Berglund, 2007:76; Emrich, 2015:13; Foster, 2016:83).

The researcher followed Smith and Chimucheka (2014:166) recommendations by using the Schumpeter theory of entrepreneurship (1934), for it provides a much broader scope of entrepreneurship than any other theories do. The researcher considered how the barriers to women entrepreneurial successes may negatively influence business's growth and expects the research study to investigate these barriers and to focus on the success strategies women entrepreneurs employ to navigate towards business and entrepreneurial success.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Berglund (2007:88) explains that phenomenological methods are criticised based on similar limitations to qualitative research methodologies. Berglund (2007) highlights two specific criticisms researchers are facing when following a phenomenological research approach, one being the "reliance on interpretation" and the specific focus on the research participant (Berglund, 2007:88). The author explained the findings are based on the research participants "life-world" experiences, and the main criticism is the "reliance on interpretation".

The research study follows a qualitative approach, enhancing the subjective aspects of the individuals' (the women entrepreneurs) behaviour and experiences (Schurink, 2003:3); however, existing criticism indicates the risk of subjectivity (bias) and impressionism (over-generalisation) of the researcher. The qualitative research on women entrepreneurs also poses the problem of replicability. The debates surrounding it and the criticism from research refer to the unstructured approach of the qualitative study, the reliance placed on the researcher's perception, the judgment on focus areas, and limited standard procedures to follow (Bryman *et al.*, 2015:50).

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, a limited research sample, time and budget constraints and the availability of participants, additional interviews with a larger

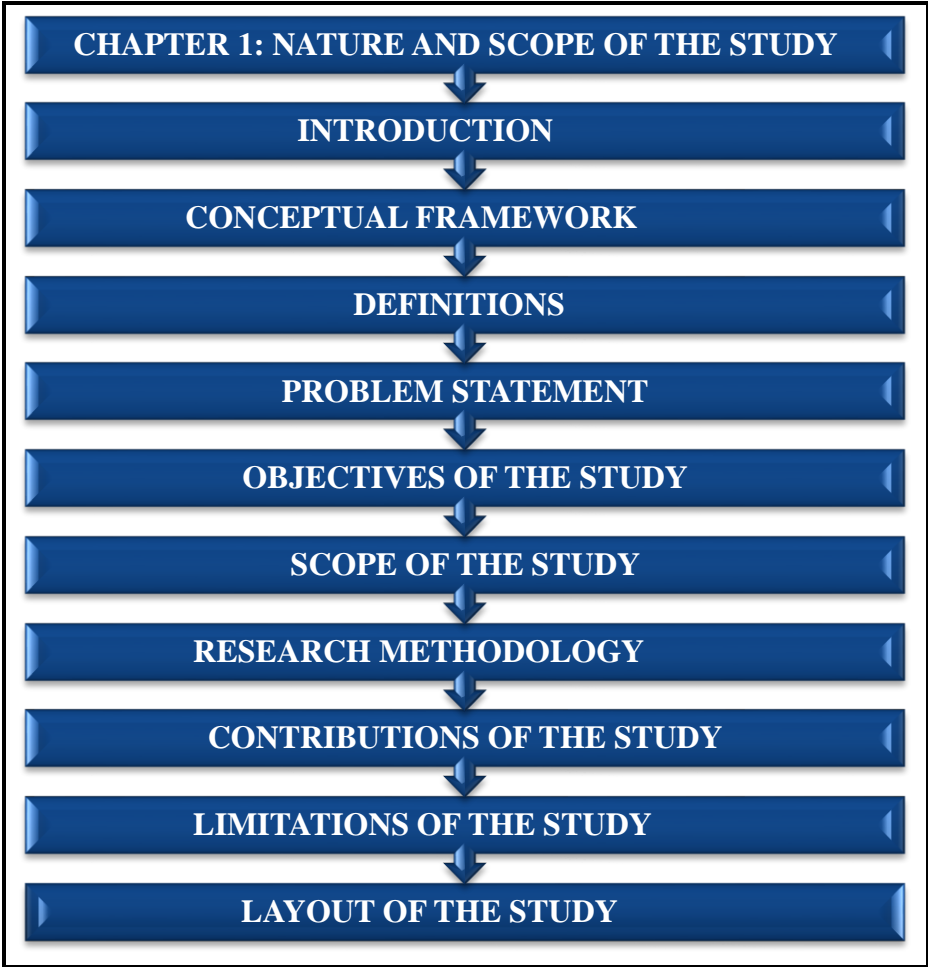
demographic scope, may have contributed to the study. The research follows an explorative research approach only, and proposes further research, which will extend the sample population.

1.10 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

The research paper consists of four chapters and will be discussed accordingly.

Chapter 1 presents the reader with the nature and scope of the study, documents the research methodology used in the literature review and the empirical study. The layout of chapter 1 is illustrated as follows:

Figure 1.3: Layout of Chapter 1



Source: Compiled by the researcher

Chapter 2 provides the literature review on women entrepreneurship namely:

- Entrepreneurship consisting of:
 - The origin of entrepreneurship;
 - The earlier and current definitions of the entrepreneur;
 - The explanation of the entrepreneurial process;
 - Schumpeter's theory on entrepreneurship;
 - Overview of entrepreneurship according to the GEM 2016/2017 report.

- Women entrepreneurship consisting of:
 - An overview of women entrepreneurship;
 - Factors that motivate women entrepreneurs;
 - Barriers to women entrepreneurial and business success;
 - Success strategies for women entrepreneurs.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed analysis of all the data from literature findings and empirical research. This chapter summarises and extrapolates all the data from the literature findings and the empirical research, and propose a framework of strategies women entrepreneurs use to engage in viable business and overcome barriers to entrepreneurial and businesses growth.

Chapter 4 is the final chapter of the research study. The researcher generates a final report of the findings with related discussions on the topic. The researcher thereby integrates the findings of the literature review, the research questions and present findings and discussions of the empirical study. The researcher concludes and provides the recommendations on the empirical research performed and propose guidelines for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The role of women in business and particularly entrepreneurship has transformed immensely. Entrepreneurship is a current topic and considerable research is done in this field. Research on women entrepreneurship only started featuring during the late 1970s and became a phenomenon explored by various academics in the traditional male dominated environment, where women were not recognised as an entrepreneur or business owner (Meyer & Landsberg, 2015:3857).

Isabelle Allen, the international expert of sales and marketing, based in London for KPMG highlights: “The world is rapidly changing. There is a blurring of lines between large enterprises versus start-ups, between global and local businesses and between men’s and women’s roles. Disruption and the breaking down of barriers is the new normal” (KPMG, 2015:1).

This research study relates to the field of entrepreneurship, with focus on women entrepreneurship. The researcher considered and realised additional conceptions can be established in related fields of research; however, limited the scope to the field of entrepreneurial research. The literature review provided insight into women entrepreneurship in general. The aim was to identify important, existing literature on women entrepreneurial behaviour and explore women’s entrepreneurial behaviours that lead to success for the South African women entrepreneur.

The researcher discussed the various features of women entrepreneurship which includes motivation for business venture creation; barriers to entrepreneurial success; challenges women face within their respective businesses and strategies women use to navigate their way to business success.

The researcher first introduces entrepreneurial concepts, and thereafter provides a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. The researcher examined the Schumpeter's theory on entrepreneurship and examined the primary behaviour activities of women entrepreneurs in creating successful businesses beyond 3.5 years.

2.2 ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The term entrepreneur originated from the French verb 'entreprendre', during the 17th century (Shodganga, 2017:2), and relates to an individual who "undertakes" or "go-between", and takes the risk associated to new venture start-ups (Freit, 2013:1).

The term was developed and defined by various scholars, and Freit (2013:8) illustrated the prominent definitions of an entrepreneur in early research.

- 1803: Jean-Baptiste: *"An entrepreneur is an economic agent, who unites all means of production- land of one, the labour of another and the capital of yet another and thus produces a product. By selling the product in the market, he pays rent of land; wages to labour, interest on capital and what remains is his profit. He shifts economic resources out of an area of lower and into an area of higher productivity and greater yield."*
- 1934: Schumpeter: *"Entrepreneurs are innovators who use a process of shattering the status quo of the existing products and services, to set up new products, new services."*
- 1961: David McClelland: *"An entrepreneur is a person with a high need for achievement [N-Ach]. He is energetic and a moderate risk taker."*
- 1964: Peter Drucker: *"An entrepreneur searches for change, responds to it and exploits opportunities. Innovation is a specific tool of an entrepreneur hence an effective entrepreneur converts a source into a resource."*
- 1971: Kilby: *"Emphasizes the role of an imitator entrepreneur who does not innovate but imitates technologies innovated by others. Are very important in developing economies."*

- 1975: Albert Shapero: *“Entrepreneurs take initiative, accept risk of failure and have an internal locus of control.”*
- 1975: Howard Stevenson: *“Entrepreneurship is "the pursuit of opportunity without regard to resources currently controlled.”*
- 1985: W.B. Gartner: *“Entrepreneur is a person who started a new business where there was none before.”*

Source: quote from Freit (2013:8)

The term entrepreneur evolved and more recent definitions relate to individuals who search for an opportunity in the market and who use resources to grow their business, thus supplying the market with demand (Smit & Chimucheka, 2014:160).

Nieman (2001:58) highlights that entrepreneurs are exposed to risk, however accept this risk with the expectation of return and growth from his/her successful business venture. In contradiction to Nieman (2001:58), Schumpeter in the early twentieth century, believed that the entrepreneur did not carry the risk, but rather the “capitalist” (Freit, 2013:2).

Zimmerer and Scarborough (2008:5) also regard the entrepreneur as a risk taker, with the ability to identify growth and profitability opportunities; operate under uncertainty with associated risk; and are able to engage factors in production to generate growth and return within their business. Entrepreneurs are perceived as “economic agents” who are able to identify and exploit opportunities using the required factors of production (Van Aardt *et al.*, 2008:4).

Shodgana (2017:4) distinguishes between an entrepreneur and entrepreneurship by referring to an entrepreneur as an individual who “combines capital and labour for the purpose of production” and entrepreneurship as “undertaking an enterprise”, thus the individual who “undertakes” the enterprise is the entrepreneur.

The GEM report (2012:18) describes the process of entrepreneurship as: “As a complex endeavour carried out by people living in specific cultural and social conditions. For this

reason, the positive or negative perceptions that society has about entrepreneurship can strongly influence the motivations of people to enter entrepreneurship. If the economy in general has a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, this can generate cultural and social support, financial and business assistance, and networking benefits that will encourage and facilitate potential and existing entrepreneurs.”

Freit (2013:2) highlights Schumpeter’s explanation of an entrepreneur as “willing and able to convert a new idea or intervention into successful innovation” and entrepreneurship as “the gale of creative destruction to replace in whole or in part inferior innovations across markets and industries, simultaneously creating new products including new business models.”

Over the years, different and similar definitions of entrepreneurs emerged (Freit, 2013:8). Swanepoel and Niewenhuizen (2010:63) also regard entrepreneurship as a progressive concept. In earlier works, authors such as Jones, George and Hill (1999:609) similarly describe entrepreneurship as the identification of opportunities, the gathering of required resources to provide the consumer with new and innovative products and services.

Kuratko and Hodgetts (2004:30) developed a more integrated definition to entrepreneurship, whereby they highlight the process of entrepreneurship as a “dynamic process of vision, change and creation”. The authors’ mentioned the required use of resources such as “energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions.” In this definition Kuratko and Hodgetts regard specific resources such as the capability to create effective project teams; the “creative skill” to manage resources; the skill and knowledge to create the ultimate business plan, with a “vision to recognise opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion” as significant to the entrepreneur.

A study performed by Smit and Chimucheka (2014:162) supported this definition by referring to success factors of effective entrepreneurship identified by Nieman and Niewenhuizen (2009:14-19). The authors highlight that entrepreneurs are not just “economic agents” but also have effective management skills to engage in entrepreneurial activity (Nieman & Niewenhuizen, 2009:14-19).

Smit and Chimucheka (2014:162) highlight the important success factors of effective entrepreneurship in Table 2.1, however adapted the identified success factors from Nieman and Niewenhuizen (2009:14-19) and present the following table:

Table 2.1 Success factors of effective entrepreneurship

The entrepreneurial function	The managerial function
Creativity and innovation	Planning
Risk orientation	Knowledge of competitors
Leadership	Mainly market oriented
Good human relations	Client service
Positive attitude	High quality work enjoys priority
Perseverance	Financial insight and management
Commitment	Knowledge and skills with regards to the business; and the use of experts

Source: Table from Smit and Chimucheka (2014:162)

Buthelezi (2011:25) supports the findings of Nieman and Niewenhuizen (2009:14-19) and explain that successful entrepreneurs require fundamental management skills, business “know-how”, and in addition require a sufficient network of contacts. In addition, personal ambitions also influence the entrepreneur. Buthelezi (2011:25-26) also supported the study conducted by Gatewood, Shaver and Gartner (1995:373), which highlights the relation of ambition of entrepreneurs and how they perceive themselves, which will result in enthusiasm in identifying opportunities, selection of ideas, acting upon recognition, with the persistence to a goal directed achievement.

In conclusion, the researcher regards the entrepreneur as innovative, driven, and willing to search for and recognise good opportunities and pursuing their goals with the expectation of achieving growth and profitability. The researcher also identifies the entrepreneur as an individual who undertake an enterprise with sound business and management skills and effectively utilises factors of production.

The Schumpeter's theory of entrepreneurship provides the theoretical basis for the research study. The following section discusses the Schumpeter's theory on entrepreneurs and why the researcher considered using this theory as basis for the research study.

2.2.1 Schumpeter's theory on entrepreneurship

The research study is based on the theory of Schumpeter's (1934). Smit and Chimucheka (2014:166) highlight the Schumpeter's view of an entrepreneur as a driving force who transforms economies by altering the production process with innovation and improved effective processes. The researchers explained that in Schumpeter's view, entrepreneurs carry out certain activities, which contribute to the concept of innovation. These relate to introducing new products and services; introducing new methods of producing the products; exposing new markets; discovering and introducing new resources within the production process and changing industries by either having a first mover advantage or closing down existing competitive industries (Smith & Chimucheka, 2014:166).

Smith and Chimucheka (2014:166) recommend using the Schumpeter theory of entrepreneurship (1934), for it provides a much broader scope of entrepreneurship than any other theories do. Spenser (2016:2) agreed with the authors and further highlighted that barriers to entrepreneurial successes have a negative impact on a business's growth, which "coincides" with Schumpeter's theory. Spenser (2016:2) therefore implies that entrepreneurs need to "break the norm" to overcome the barriers to entrepreneurial success.

Deakins and Freel (2009:4) explain that unlike other theories, Schumpeter regards the entrepreneur as a special individual, who transforms and change through innovative products and technologies. The authors further explained that other theories, in contrast to Schumpeter, recognise any individual as a potential entrepreneur who operates within factor of production constraints.

Barriers to entrepreneurial success are multi-dimensional and complex (Spenser 2016:2); and the researcher therefore considered the Schumpeter's theory in understanding the experiences of successful women entrepreneurs operating in the Vaal Triangle in terms of 1) how they

navigated their way through entrepreneurial success and 2) how these women entrepreneurs may in future assist other women with the similar outlook.

2.2.2 Demographics and profiles of an entrepreneur

Nieuwenhuizen (2004:40) recognises that entrepreneurs possess individual characteristics that distinguish them from ordinary people; also supporting the Schumpeter’s theory (Deakins & Freel, 2009:40).

Entrepreneurs are individuals with determination and persistence; they have the desire to accomplish and succeed; the ability to work hard, have the tendency to strive for quality and excellence; are profit driven, accept responsibility, are good organisers, optimistic and have a passion for business and tolerate risk (Van Aardt *et al.*, 2008:9; Nieman & Nieuwenhuizen 2009:32).

Shmailan (2016:3) highlights similar characteristics in both men and women entrepreneurs, and indicate distinctive characteristics such as “styles, risk tolerance, goals for the business, financing of the business, management styles, networking ability, motivations.”

Research shows women entrepreneurs, in comparison to men, have unique characteristics and with different backgrounds that relates to demographic and personal profiles (Deborah *et al.*, 2015:39). Researchers in general divide the unique characteristics of men and women entrepreneurs into two categories, namely demographic and personal profiles (Lebakeng, 2008:30). Coulter (2003:18) highlights prominent demographic factors such as work experience, gender, education and family background. Shmailan (2016:3) provides a summary of the differences between male and females entrepreneurs, as presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: General characteristics of male and female entrepreneurs

Male Entrepreneurs	Female Entrepreneurs
Decision making easy	Difficulty in making decisions
Business focused on economy and cost	Business focused on making social contribution and quality

Willing to take financial risk	More conservative When it comes to financial risk
Task oriented managers	Focus on good relationships with employees
Business manufacturing and construction	Business small retail and service orientation

Source: Table from Shmailan (2016:3)

The table of differences indicate that women find it more difficult to make decisions compared to male entrepreneurs. Men in general tend to focus more on profitability and wealth creation, in comparison to women who have the tendency to want to contribute to society and focus on quality product and service delivery. Women are also more conservative when it comes to taking financial risks. Men are task oriented, while women want to ensure good relations with their stakeholders. Women have the tendency to engage in small retail and service industry, in comparison to male tendency to engage in more technical fields such as engineering and technical developments.

Tadria (2007:5) highlights research done on the personality traits of entrepreneurs, however established that no agreement exists on whether an individual is born as an entrepreneur or not. The researcher’s study reveals that women are creative, are also able to take risk and have determination to be successful. The researcher further highlighted that these women are energetic, optimistic and sociable. Hard work, good networking skills and a determination to succeed were characteristics found in all research participants. A study performed by KPMG (2015:1), also revealed that successful women and men entrepreneurs can share similar traits.

2.2.3 South African entrepreneurial activities: highlights from the 2016/2017 GEM Report

South Africa experienced unstable political and economic forces in this time that had a significant influence on the welfare of the country and its population. Corruption, ill-considered changes to the cabinet, crime and corruption resulted in rating agencies, such as Fitch and Standard and Poor, to down grade South Africa to “junk status”. As a result, South African Gross Domestic Product (GDP) suffered a severe growth set back and recession. Unemployment, with a weak job generating capacity, and significant high-income

distributions contributed to inequality and poverty. The unemployment rate reached a high of 27%, of which 40% relates to the “expanded rate”. The youth unemployment showed a concerning rate at 65% (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:67).

Small and medium-sized enterprises are key priorities to the South African government, contributing to employment, job creation and economic growth. The nurturing of an enhanced enabling business environment is key priority in this sector (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:6).

The age of entrepreneurial activity in South Africa pose a reason for concern. The youth’s participation in entrepreneurial activity in the 25-34 year age group, declined by almost 40% in comparison to the 2015 results. Results revealed that the activity is less than a third of our neighbouring African countries. These results are significantly lower in “efficiency-driven” economies, placing South Africa 58th out of 65 economies. The result in this age category caused an overall decline in the Total Early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA). On a three-year average, the participation rates of 45-54 year olds are on the increase. Redundancy in aged workers and the lack of prospects of finding jobs in the current market might be the contributing factor (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:7-8).

Results also showed concern in the 18-24 age participation rates. South Africa rates lower than our neighbouring countries (2.4 times lower) and “efficiency-driven” countries (2 times lower) at a 6% (Herrington *et al.*, 2016: 7-8).

Results revealed that the gender gaps are decreasing in comparison to the 2015 results. The 2016 results revealed that more than seven women participated, in comparison to every ten male, in early-stage entrepreneurship. The results are consistent with the findings of other African countries, as well as “efficiency-driven countries” (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:7-8).

South Africa experienced an overall decline in TEA rating. Male entrepreneurial activity contributed to the overall decline in the 2016 TEA rating. The male TEA rate decreased by 31%. The female TEA index also decreased, however only by 16% (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:7-8).

A pressing reassessment of the regulatory constraints on small businesses is vital. The GEM report highlights the important findings of the “Doing Business Reports 2016 and 2017”

which states “the time taken to complete the procedures necessary to start a business in South Africa, has more than doubled since 2015 – a shocking indictment of government inefficiency and bureaucracy at a time when stimulating the SME sector is so critical to South Africa’s growth prospects” (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:71).

The GEM report further recommended that the regulations surrounding new venture start-ups need reviewing. By limiting, the “bureaucracy” and “red tape”, new businesses will be created easier and faster, and considering small to medium business contribute significantly to job creation, the reduction in poverty will improve the country’s welfare and economic growth (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:71).

2.3 WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

2.3.1 Introduction

Women entrepreneurs’ economic statuses are being recognised and are increasingly becoming a significant force in Africa, although the growth potential is yet to be researched (Oluwatoyin, 2010:3348). Women entrepreneurs globally have a critical role to play in reducing poverty, promoting growth, creating jobs and contributing significantly to countries’ economic development overall, however, they also have to deal with numerous challenges. Challenges include access to finance, capital, limited networks, knowledge, regulatory and policy barriers within the context of business development and ownership in their respective businesses (World Bank, 2016:1).

The majority of countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) regard the gender factor as significant to entrepreneurship in a country (OECD, 2016:8). The OECD 2016 report revealed that men between the ages of (15-24) represented 5.1% of self-employment while self-employed women in comparison only represent 3.4% of this population. The gender gap between men and women, aged between 55 and up, revealed men represented 29.2% of the population and women at a low of 15.9%. A Facebook-OECD-World Bank survey research, however, revealed that women are more confident with a better outlook once their businesses are in succession (OECD, 2016:8). Another significant factor is access to finance to start up their business. The OECD 2016 report revealed that on average

males (34%) are more likely to declare they have access to finances for start-up ventures in comparison to their female counterparts (27%) with the necessary support to acquire such finances (OECD, 2016:8).

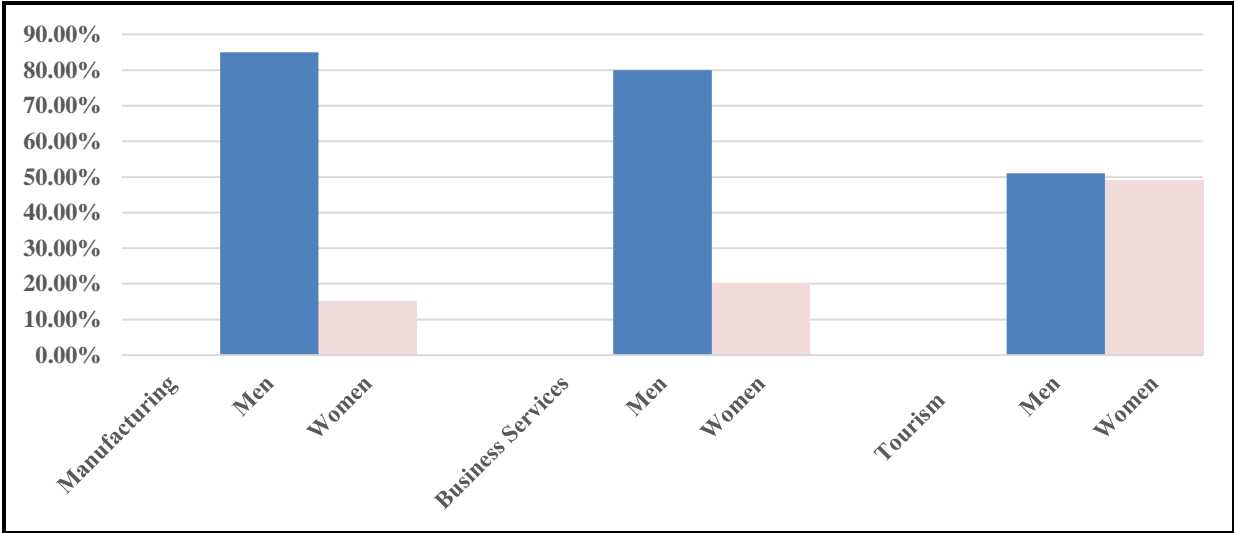
The GEM Global Report (2016/17:31) also revealed that the ratio of “male to female participation in early-stage entrepreneurial activity” are different over the total sampled population indicating that men are more susceptible to engage in entrepreneurial endeavours (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:31).

Mandipaka (2014:1188) highlights the unique gender challenges in developing countries. The researcher stated that women entrepreneurs encounter more challenges due to family responsibility, education, training and access to finances. The World Bank survey research revealed that women entrepreneurs in general have lower professional networking opportunities than men, and the lack thereof result in limited information, personal contacts and access to business opportunities (World Bank, 2016:1).

The findings in the GEM (2016/2017) report revealed certain obstacles might prevent women from engaging in entrepreneurial activities. The obstacles include higher family and domestic responsibility, lower education levels (especially developing countries), lack of sufficient resources, role models, weaker network structures within communities, lack of self-confidence and assertiveness and inferior standing in the society and within cultural differences (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:31).

In general, women owned enterprises relate and focus on the retail and service industries and not in construction and technological development, where growth and profit opportunities are higher (World Bank, 2016:1). Shmailan (2016:3) also highlighted that women entrepreneurs tend to pursue their education in creative arts with a lower income potential, rather than technical fields such as engineering and other related technical disciplines. The SME Growth Index investigated industries with the highest growth and “value-adding” prospects, the predominant sectors related to manufacturing industries, business services and tourism (SBP, 2013:2) and Graph 2.1 illustrates the differences.

Graph 2.1: Business industry by gender



Source: SBP (2013:2)

The number of women business owners continues to increase steadily worldwide (Lebakeng, 2008:9), which require a women’s perspective to the field of entrepreneurship (Eddleston & Powell, 2008:244).

Women are significant role players in economic development since their influences do not only contribute to a country’s economic position, but also influence how the public and communities perceive and respond to women (Tominc & Rebernik 2003:781).

Successful women entrepreneurs not only challenge the perception that African women are dependant, fragile and destitute, they also challenge the myths that “economically empowered” women are unable and not willing to work with men (Tadria, 2007:1). Buthelezi (2011:30) in addition, highlighted that economically empowered women will enable economically empowered men and that perceptions need to be changed. The researcher now considers factors that motivate women to create new ventures.

2.3.2 Factors that motivate women to new venture creation

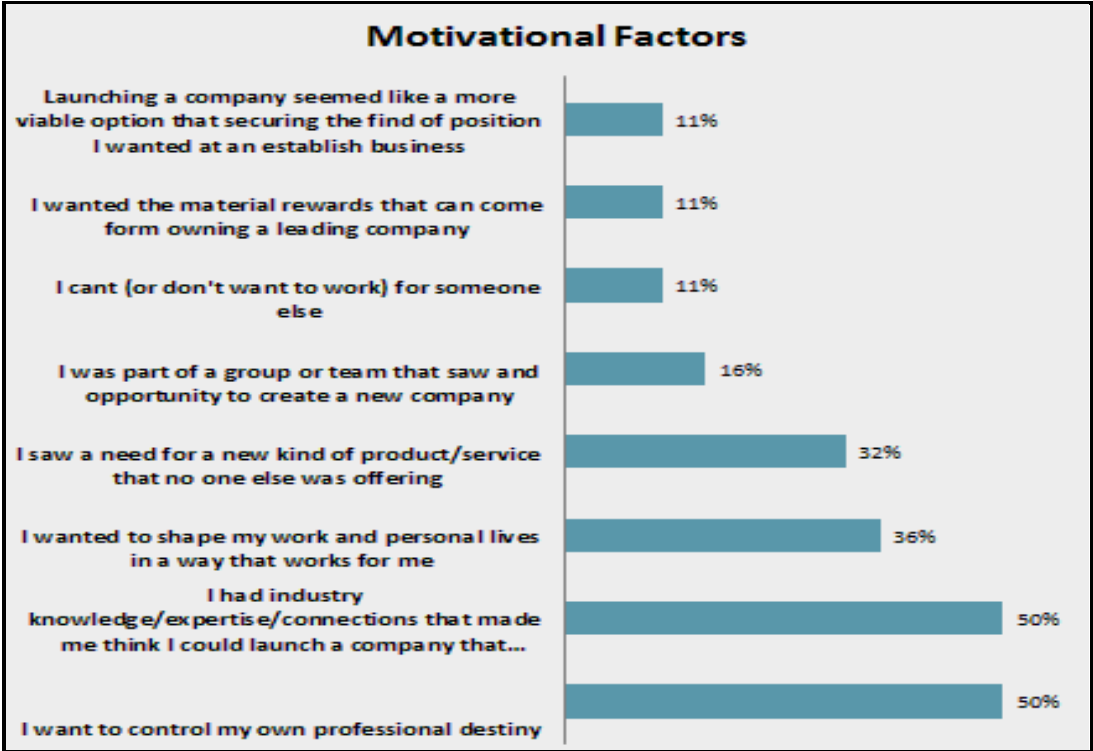
Literature reveals a number of differences in the motivations of women and men entrepreneurs, and shows that women in general have more specific goals relative to their male counterparts (Hughes, 2006:18,109). Manolova *et al.* (2008:72) interpret the gender

dimension and highlight the importance in understanding the dynamics between women and men when it comes to factors that motivate entrepreneurs.

Lebakeng (2008:87) highlights that women are motivated to start-up new business ventures by push (necessity driven) and pull (opportunity driven) factors and state that women in general are motivated by the desire for challenges, independence, improved flexibility in their work schedule and a need for high social status.

The phenomenon of women entrepreneurs entering a traditionally male dominated environment got researchers interested in what motivated women to new business venture start-ups. They were interested in which personality traits contributed to their business success? Which challenges to they have to overcome in business growth? How do these women want to improve and grow their current business? (KPMG, 2015:1). KPMG (2015) interviewed 204 successful founders of 5,000 leading women-owned enterprises globally KPMG (2015:3). Graph 2.2 illustrates the significant factors influencing the motivation to start up their businesses.

Graph 2.2: Motivation to start-up businesses



Source: Graph from KPMG (2015:3)

Graph 2.2 revealed that most women had the desire to control their own destiny and take advantage of their experiences, skills and new ideas in the search for new opportunities. In general, women's motivations for venture start-ups relate to the ideology of self-fulfilment, personal accomplishments, creativity, independence and to become financially self-sufficient (Buthelezi, 2011:30).

Meyer and Landsberg (2015:3859) highlighted numerous reasons for men and women to start new business ventures, and state that women in general enter this sector due to high unemployment rates, divorce, survival and economic conditions. The researcher further provides other influencing factors as the desire for challenges, independence, improving her financial position, the desire to become her own boss and for flexibility where women are able to balance work with family responsibility.

Cohoon *et al.* (2010:8) and Buthelezi (2011:30) argued that women entrepreneurs are predominantly motivated by the desire to engage in new venture start-ups, to own their own business and not work for another person and to capitalise on ideas and to build wealth.

2.3.2.1 The ideology of independence, self-fulfilment and success

Research shows women's motivational factors are complex, and require not only to investigate the "push" and "pull" factors as motivation for these women, but to also understand the complexities of their lives, their decisions to leave formal employment, consideration of their decision making processes and the transition to change (Patterson, 2007:3; SBP,2013:3). Sibanyoni (2012:65) in addition, states that women are more likely drawn by motivational factors where independence and flexibility factors are significant.

The SME Growth Index revealed one of the motivational factors for engaging in entrepreneurial activity relates to independence. Men, in general, rate this motivation for starting a business, much higher than their female counterparts (SBP, 2013:5).

Buthelezi (2011:37) highlights that, taking into consideration that women have these complexities to their decision-making, moving towards self-employment is difficult. The researcher further states that independence is a major factor, which motivates women to start

their own businesses and includes other “pull” factors such as the desire for self-fulfilment and accomplishment, being one’s own boss and a desire for power and social status.

According to Tadria (2007:4), women have an ideology of success; and revealed that the outcomes from her study indicated that women were not motivated by economic gain as much but rather by the ideology of success factor. The researcher revealed that women rather focus on success instead of being self-fulfilled, independence, and being a good role model. Education also contributed to the ideology of success. Women who have a strong educational background revealed they were pushed into becoming an entrepreneur due to strong gender roles (Tadria, 2007:4). Women in general are not motivated by monetary rewards, but rather driven by a self-fulfilment prophesy (Buthelezi, 2011:37), and in general have the desire to create and the monetary return from their business is merely a method to sustain the business (Acharya, 2009:61). The SME Growth Index revealed one of the motivational factors for engaging in entrepreneurial activity relates to personal motivation factor for self-fulfilment (SBP, 2013:5).

An early study by Helms (1997:18) also revealed that women form new ventures for personal advancement. The researcher highlighted three predominant reasons for starting up of women enterprises and they relate to personal autonomy, security and self-fulfilment. Anwar and Rashid (2012:8) also highlight personal motivational factors like self-fulfilment and the desire for achievement as significant motivational factors for female entrepreneurs globally. The researchers regard the status of females in societies of developing countries as a significant motivational factor. In general, women have efficient qualitative management skills, which include scenario-planning, commitment to hard work and perseverance (Buthelezi, 2011:38).

2.3.2.2 Family business

Buthelezi (2011:38) regards a family business as a unit where family and businesses are united and which functions as a separate and unique entity. The researcher further highlighted the importance of family businesses to the woman entrepreneurs and acknowledged the professional contribution of women entrepreneurial activities.

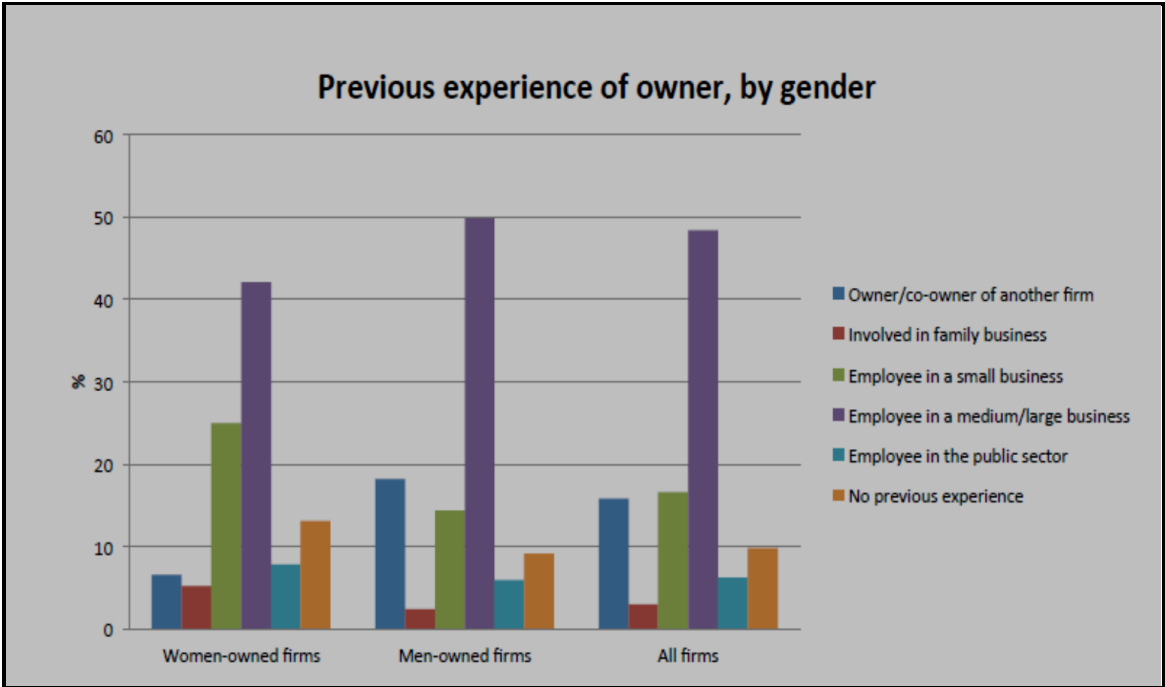
In addition, Ernst and Young (2014:1) stated that where women are rapidly entering family businesses globally, they are growing faster than non-family business. These businesses are

significant to the economy globally and contribute to an estimated 70%–90% to the global GDP, and create up to 50%–80% of the labour market. Family businesses provide a higher number of employees, control market, and are fundamentally vital to society, local communities and contribute to economies globally (EY, 2014:1).

An early study conducted by Harveston, Davis and Lyden (1997:380) revealed that women who were exposed to family businesses, are more likely to partake in entrepreneurial endeavours; and the SME Growth index supports this finding (SBP, 2013:5). Women tend to join the family businesses as it prepares the next generation participation (EY, 2014:8).

The SME Growth Index revealed that a motivational factor for engaging in entrepreneurial activity relates to family commitment and pertain to the entrepreneur taking over the family business (SBP, 2013:5). The SME Growth Index shows that women are more likely to have previous experience in family owned businesses in comparison to their male counterparts, and Figure 2.2 illustrates the differences in work experience.

Graph 2.3 Work experience in family owned businesses



Source: SBP (2013:5)

Buthelezi (2011:38) highlights that women's contribution towards "family wealth" creation have been ignored and state that researchers attempted to explore this phenomena. Buthelezi (2011:38) supports the study conducted by Mulholland (2003:22) which revealed that the role of women changed from only engaging in family matters to being business owners.

2.3.2.3 Flexibility

Tadria (2007:5) highlights that women are pushed to become entrepreneurs due to improved flexibility surrounding their family responsibilities and numerous gender roles. Meyer (2009:20) also confirms that flexibility is a major motivational factor for women to enter the field of entrepreneurship and highlights the importance for the women to balance work and family responsibility.

Family responsibilities have a significant impact on the motivation for the women's decision to enter self-employment, considerably more than men (Buthelezi, 2011:39). Buthelezi (2011:39) highlights that women start business ventures for this reason and with the expectation that they control how, when and where they perform their duties. The researcher emphasised that women working for themselves do not consider the hours of work, but rather consider the flexibility component to self-accomplishment.

De Martino and Barbato (2003:816) explain that women tend to start new ventures to balance family and work life, in comparison to men seeking profitability and the creation of wealth. The researcher further highlights the flexibility component in entrepreneurship, which is not normally found in formal employment.

According to Deborah *et al.* (2015:39), flexibility is a significant motivation for women with childcare responsibilities as self-employment enables improved balance of work and family responsibility.

Acharaya (2009:61) highlights that women have an adaptive nature and the ability to take care of their customers and business changing demands. Buthelezi (2011:39) regards women as good organisers that have the ability to effectively utilise resources in reaching their goals, relating to both family responsibility and their business.

2.3.2.4 Unemployment

According to the World Bank, almost one billion women globally are unable to find work in the formal sector of which 812 million are women from developing countries. These women have the potential to significantly contribute to a country's economy in the fight to reduce poverty. Women in the informal sector, engage in entrepreneurial activity in low productivity industries resulting in limited income growth and employment (World Bank, 2014:2).

The labour market situation in a country contributes towards women entering the entrepreneurial field to seek new opportunities. Women often cannot find work that allows them to develop according to their skill and capabilities. Women become self-employed due to unemployment and turn to self-employment as a last resort (Anwar & Rashid, 2012:8).

Buthelezi (2011:39) highlights the need for self-employment in economies and regard "necessity-based" entrepreneurs as not having the necessary skills and requirements to create the new businesses. The researcher places emphasis on the need for development and highlights that even though they do not have the skills, they often still prosper and contribute to societies and generate an income, which the formal sector is unable to provide.

2.3.2.5 Opportunity identification

According to Deborah *et al.* (2015:39), women entrepreneurs are creative and have the ability to improve or alternate existing products and services. Women in general have the ability to identify opportunities and act thereon.

The development of South African women entrepreneurs receives support from international, governmental and non-governmental and membership organisations and women now have the opportunity to join these organisations where they are able to upgrade their business skills in fields such as bookkeeping and marketing (Buthelezi, 2011:40).

Verwey (2006:3) mentions that the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) provides a platform for women in construction through The South African Women in Construction (SAWIC) association, which provides opportunities for women in construction, promote job creation and sustainable growth by empowerment and support of women in the construction

industry. SAWIC supplies support to business ownership and skilled occupations. SAWIC is in affiliation with the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC). SAWIC empowers women in construction and provides support for these women in identifying job opportunities, they provide training, finance and provide networks to support these women. The purpose of the SAWIC organisation is to build an encouraging image for women engaging in construction activities, which are considered a non-traditional field for women entrepreneurs (SAWIC, 2017:1).

The South African private and public sectors recognise the importance of women entrepreneurs for a growing economy. The Chamber of Commerce and other agencies such as the South African Women Network (SAWEN) focus on the improvement of women's entrepreneurial opportunities. SAWEN supports women entrepreneurs but the women are required to search and pursue attractive and good opportunities (Buthelezi, 2011:40).

2.3.3 Barriers to women entrepreneurial and business success

Garg and Duvenhage (2014:453) highlighted the changes in women's roles in the economy and explained that women were perceived as more conservative than men were in any given circumstance. The researchers explained that only since the 1970's did development of women move towards obtaining "legal equality" and women started experiencing an increase in the number of work opportunities. The researchers further highlight the changes in risk-taking and entrepreneurial behaviour during the eighties and the recognition of women entrepreneurs as a key social agent (Garg & Duvenhage, 2014:453).

A "challenge" relates to an event where an individual's ability is tested; and relates to a circumstance, action or event that creates a barrier to progress (Stevenson, 2010:287).

Chinomona and Maziriri (2015:839) highlight that great intellectual or physical effort is required to overcome the barrier successfully. Horn *et al.* (2009:90) defined a barrier as an obstruction that prevents movement, drive and access.

Buthelezi (2011:28) suggests that when an entrepreneur only seeks opportunities in the area in which they are situated, they may limit growth in the economy's entrepreneurial development.

Barriers to women entrepreneurs’ success are spread over a wide range of factors, which are different to women and men; contributing factors relating to motivation for new venture creation, types of ventures and the required opportunities (Garg & Duvenhage, 2014:453). De Martino *et al.* (2003:816) are in agreement and state women are becoming entrepreneurs to balance work and family in contrast to men seeking economic return with the purpose of creating wealth.

Handy *et al.* (2002:140) highlight other barriers to the individual entrepreneurs as lack of opportunity recognisers, no encouragement of innovative ideas, not executing ideas into sustainable ventures, no organisation of required resources and not accepting the risk associated with starting up a new business venture.

An early study performed by Brush (1997:20) revealed barriers to women entrepreneurial process, includes family responsibility, lack of respect for women, lack of tangible resources to promote growth and development.

Buthelezi (2011:32) provides a summary in Ahl (2006:604) of various authors’ earlier views on the barriers to woman entrepreneurial activities as presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.3: Summary of earlier view on barriers to women entrepreneurial activities

Statement	Authors
Having a psychological makeup that is less entrepreneurial or at least different from that of a man’s;	Fagenson (1993); Neider (1987);Sexton & Bowman-Upton (1990); Zapalska (1997)
Having less motivation for entrepreneurship or growth of their businesses;	Buttner & Moore (1997); Fischer <i>et al.</i> (1993)
Having insufficient education or experience;	Boden & Nucci, (2000)
Having unique start-up difficulties or training needs;	Birley <i>et al.</i> (1987); Nelson (1987); Pellegrino & Reece (1982)
Using less than optimal or perhaps feminine management practices or strategies;	Carter <i>et al.</i> (1997); Chaganti (1986); Cuba <i>et al.</i> (1983); Olson & Currie (1992); Van Auken, <i>et al.</i> (1994)

Behaving irrationally by turning to unqualified family members for help;	Nelson (1989)
Not networking optimally;	Aldrich <i>et al.</i> (1989); Cromie & Birley (1992); Katz & Williams (1997); Smeltzer & Fann (1989)
Perceiving other women as less cut for the role of entrepreneurship;	Fagenson & Marcus (1991)
Attributing loan denials to gender bias instead of flaws in the business plan.	Buttner & Rosen (1992)

Source: In Buthelezi (2011:32) from Ahl (2006:604)

The researcher considers challenges of women entrepreneurs as barriers to entrepreneurial and business success. The researcher therefore considers barriers as challenges where women require mental effort, intellectual or physical to overcome these barriers. The researcher perceives challenges, as obstructions to the women to effectively and efficiently run their business.

Meyer (2009:26) highlights challenging factors identified by Van Vuuren and Groenewald (2007:273) as:

- The limited access to finances for new business venture start ups
- A lack of education and training
- Failure of government support and discrimination
- Restrictive regulatory requirements and bureaucracy
- Lack of business knowledge

Lebakeng (2008:88) supports Kock's (2008:103) findings and also regards the lack of management skills in business, education and training as contributing factors to barriers of entrepreneurial and business success; and in addition referred to other factors such as lack of timely business information. Lebakeng (2008:88) further highlights the lack of access to finances, the absence of female role models, inter-role conflict challenges, high-risk adverse factors and high family responsibility. Kock (2008:103) also considered personal factors such as higher levels of insecurity, low self-assurance and awareness.

2.3.3.1 Gender roles and family responsibility

According to Mandipaka (2014:1188), the significant distinctive characteristic between women and men is the high responsibility society often placed on women as wives and mothers. Family responsibilities present a barrier to these women to engage in successful entrepreneurial activities in both industrialised and emerging countries (Mandipaka, 2014:1188).

Deborah *et al.* (2015:44) confirm the commitment to family and its constraints provide a barrier to the women entrepreneurial process. The researchers highlight that married women have two different functions, one as businesswomen, and the other as mother, wife and caretaker. The researchers also found that women are reluctant to start a new business venture due to the high family responsibility and often only wait until the children left home, before they start with business (Deborah *et al.*, 2015:44).

Women have to divide their time between family and work life (Fortuin, 2016:44). Cheung and Halpern (2010:185) highlighted that one of the success strategies women use is to create a “link” between family responsibilities and work life, but still separate their family from work life. The researchers’ study revealed that for women it was not of importance how they balanced their work and family responsibilities but rather on how they incorporated the two functions. The researchers further explained that women set guidelines for switching family responsibilities and business undertakings and those women often brought their children along when needed to work away on business trips (Cheung & Halpern, 2010:185).

Women in general, create their own businesses due to family responsibility with the prospect of managing their families and looking after their children with flexibility; the force driving their decisions (Garg & Duvenhage, 2014:453).

Mandipaka (2014:1188) placed emphasis on the a fact that a small number of women are able to engage in viable business practise due to their responsibility of looking after their children, domestic duties and where elderly family members rely on them for care.

The success of women in business is greatly influenced by spousal support (Fortuin, 2016:44). Women often rely on their husbands to play a significant role in functions relating

to domestic duties and in these cases where husbands supported their wife in her accomplishments; they often have successful marriages (Cheung & Halpern, 2010:185).

Women are also reliant on their own personal savings and financial support from family members, as the majority of financial service providers do not provide financial support to women entrepreneurs. Women in general often rely on the support of family members to manage their business (Mandipaka, 2014:1188).

Botha (2006:134) recognised the most significant variable influencing women's businesses and work relationships as the absence of flexibility in business. Women are not able to unwind, are over exhausted and have lower ability to follow personal interests. The researcher also stated that women developed strategies to overcome barriers of family responsibility and her role as entrepreneur and explains women follow a rational approach to make decisions surrounding their schedule of balancing family life and work.

2.3.3.2 Education and training

One of the main difficulties women experience in business is work and educational related barriers. Education in business and skills training has a positive influence and enhances the performance of a business (Mandipaka, 2014:1188).

Buthelezi (2011:42) highlighted other significant challenges, faced by South African entrepreneurs, as the weakness of education and training levels of these women. The absence of sufficient education and training of these women entrepreneurs, cause a barrier to women entrepreneurship.

Taking advantage of entrepreneurial opportunity is subject to the individual's level of knowledge obtained from work experience, through their shared networks, their skills and education (Mandipaka, 2014:1188). The lack in education and training is concerning and relates to both developing and developed nations.

Chinomona and Maziriri (2015:840) state that managing a business poses a high risk for the entrepreneur, more so for the women entrepreneur operating in a male dominated environment, often with lower educational levels and inadequate training in the field. Ascher

(2012:100) highlights the concern of illiteracy of women in developing countries within communities living in poverty.

Chinomona and Maziriri (2015:840) also found that one of the main weaknesses influencing women entrepreneurial activities to be the lack of training and education among these women in the formal and informal sector, which are important to the performance of an enterprise.

Buthelezi (2011:46) referred to an earlier study conducted by Jalbert, (2000:29) and highlighted the required technical support in emerging and economies in transition, where the absence of business managerial skills are evident.

Chinomona and Maziriri (2015:840) emphasised that training is vital for entrepreneurs not only to survive but to also flourish and contribute to an economy. The researcher refers to a study performed by Jalbert (2000:29), who placed emphasis on the need for entrepreneurs and associations to strengthen their skills through “skills-based training, technical training, technology training, and delivery of management skills”.

An earlier study performed by Gorman, Hanlon and King (1997:1), revealed that education provides a planning preparation platform for creating a new business venture, where the development and newly acquired skills in the acquisition of the start-up contribute to the ideology of self-efficacy. Buthelezi (2011:46) supported Gorman *et al.* (1997:1) and highlighted that studies have improved significantly; and recognised the relationship between education and training of women entrepreneurs. The researcher also supported the findings by Henry, Hill and Leitch (2003:12) which state that training in the field of entrepreneurship generates awareness and provides a platform for entrepreneurs to obtain practical skills in starting-up of new business ventures.

2.3.3.3 The socio-cultural challenge

According to Tadria (2007:8), socio-cultural attitudes are oppressive to the position of women. Cultural stereotyping towards women included gender related role expectations, which cause barriers for women to access financial and social opportunities.

Buthelezi (2011:46) highlighted that legislative and regulatory policies promote gender equality by eliminating unfavourable practice, tradition and cultural norms. The researcher indicated that pressing factors, which concern women's social statuses, are often difficult to identify and measure.

According to Meyer (2009:26), the negative attitudes from society's perception towards women entrepreneurs create significant burdens on women entrepreneurs and women in general feels discriminated against.

Buthelezi (2011:46) supported an earlier study conducted by Jalbert (2000:16), where the author also identified significant factors such as culture and social practises that influence the role of the entrepreneur in societies. These cultural, social practices and traditions often create a barrier for women to become an entrepreneur.

It is necessary to determine the significant difference between women and men entrepreneurs in a socio-cultural stand. The perception surrounding women as only the caregiver, who manages family and domestic duties, lowers the likelihood of women to start up new business ventures (Chiloane-Tsoka & Mello, 2011:1449).

Henning and Akoob (2017:1) mentioned that in developing countries, semi-literate women often start more businesses than men due to social discrimination and limited job opportunities.

2.3.3.4 Limited access to finance

Mazonde (2016:31) indicated that certain social factors also contribute to the challenges women experience in accessing finance. These relate to experience, skill, the lack of self-confidence and networking. The researcher explained that women operate in lower growth industries that relate to retail and providing services.

Mandipaka (2014:1189) highlighted that access to finance is a significant barrier to women. This was mentioned as one of the biggest concerns for women entrepreneurs. The challenge of accessing debt finance is a source of failure to many women enterprises (Mandipaka, 2014:1189).

Women generally have limited prospects of accessing credit, in comparison to men, for different reasons, and include the lack of security, reluctance to accept certain assets as security and the negative perceptions surrounding women (Mandipaka, 2014:1189).

Mazonde (2016:31) highlighted those women entrepreneurs learn to use innovative strategies for funding their businesses without borrowing or raising equity. In some cases women even use saving clubs to assist in acquiring the necessary resources for their businesses.

According to Lebakeng (2008:39), financiers are less likely to recommend loans to women in comparison to males due to woman often not having security. The researcher further explained that financing is dependent on the age of the business, the nature and industry in which the business operate, and explained that mature business are often rated as being of lower risk.

2.3.3.5 Barriers starting up the new venture.

Garg and Duvenhage (2014:453) suggested women are more prone to “risk-aversion” than men are and lower progress in entrepreneurial activities is expected.

Buthelezi (2011:46) highlighted that education is not a requirement for new venture start-ups even though it provides the individual with the necessary skills, opportunity and contacts, which are essential to successful businesses. The researcher further introduced mentoring as a required need to develop business skills.

Derera, Chitakunye and O’Neill (2014:316) emphasised that financiers market their product and create public awareness, but research suggests that women tend to be of a higher risk than men when obtaining finance. The researchers explained that women in general struggle to provide a credit history, lack financial credibility and are not able to provide security for obtaining loans. Buthelezi (2011:46) also highlighted similar concerns for young entrepreneurs, which also have an insufficient credit history or security to obtain financing. The researcher further explains that young entrepreneurs are often still paying off student loans.

2.3.3.6 The absence of female role models

Role models are recognised as individuals who create the desire in other individuals to be the same due to their behaviours, actions and assertiveness and they set an example. Gender also influences the decision of the individuals in selecting role models, where a same gender person usually attracts and influences another person of the same gender (Mandipaka, 2014:1190).

Meyer and Landsberg (2015:3858) highlight numerous challenges that affect women entrepreneurs and emphasise the lack of role model as well as other challenges, including insufficient business management skills, high-risk averseness, lower levels in training and education, inter-role conflict, challenges with access to credit and high family responsibilities.

Mandipaka (2014:1190) stated that there is a strong relation between having a role model and the increase of entrepreneurs. The researcher highlighted that due to the absence of women entrepreneurs in the past, women entrepreneurs now have a lack in women role models (Meyer & Landsberg, 2015:3858; Mandipaka, 2014:1190).

Buthelezi (2011:46) stated that certain entrepreneurs regard role models and mentors as important to support them on their journey to success. The researcher regarded mentors as being women and men who engage in business activities, family members, women with high social status who often outsource this function to professional consultants.

Meyer (2009:29) highlights that despite all the barriers to women entrepreneurial endeavours, many African women engage in successful business practice. The researcher explains that business success provides these women with a sense of self-worth, pride and self-fulfilment and that they can serve as role models for other women in society.

Buthelezi (2011:46) viewed mentors to have a responsibility towards ensuring entrance of younger women entrepreneurs, and recommended women should have access to associations which provide mentoring, and support networks to ensure women engage in successful businesses ventures.

2.3.3.7 Business management skills

Deborah *et al.* (2015:44) mentioned that apart from lack of education and training, managerial experience plays a significant part in running a business, and that a lack thereof is one of the barriers to women's business success. The authors explain that women in general, have work experience in the retail, administrative and teaching, and hardly have any experience in technical or managerial functions and that such functions are only introduced to them once they engage in business activities.

Mandipaka (2014:1188) stated that women often lack the "know how" when it comes to new venture start up and managing of a business, which in return influence the potential for success.

Meyer (2009:28) explains that the majority of women entrepreneurs do not have prior business experience, which in return results in limited managerial experience even though they may be more qualified than their male counterparts. The researcher highlights that the lack in managerial experience pose a significant barrier to women entrepreneurs.

It is often more difficult for women to acquire the relevant knowledge and skills relating to management of the business function due to high family responsibility, which in return lower their ability to effectively managing various types of businesses (Mandipaka, 2014:1189). Fortuin (2016:21) in addition, highlighted that women also have a different leadership style and require different support to progress in their careers and businesses.

Scheers (2011:5049) regards the absence of market exposure as an additional barrier to women's entrepreneurial success. The researcher emphasised the importance of a firm's external market and highlights that a solid marketing strategy may determine its success or failure. In developing a marketing strategy, the entrepreneur must identify opportunities, monitor and analyse the opportunities, weaknesses, strengths and threats posed by external market factors.

For both women and men it is difficult to enter into new markets as entrepreneurs and they require sound knowledge and skill, expertise and good networking skills together with the necessary contacts (Mandipaka, 2014:1189).

Fortuin (2016:21) mentions the stereotyping occurring in the field of management, where males are often regarded as good managers and male characteristics serve the basis of good management practises. Characteristics include challenging behaviour of men, their logic, objectiveness and straightforward approach as opposed to the perception that women are subjective and following the norm. Fortuin (2016:21) further explained that women in general tend to focus on improving skills to increase credibility and trustworthiness. Women would influence rather than instruct individuals to empower and bring change by “information sharing” and “team building”.

Mandipaka (2014:1989) stated that women strategically found it more difficult to market their products and services due to the absence of sufficient knowledge, experience and training in engaging in business activities.

Women entrepreneurs have a lack of exposure to business networks. Buthelezi (2011:46) regards a network as association/partnerships whether formal or informal, between individuals, businesses and institutions. Partnership/associations/links provide essential resources pertaining to business ventures, including contacts, knowledge and experience, and can support business growth, development, and investment in innovation. Mazonde (2016:31) also found a significant barrier to women entrepreneurship to be the ability to network while women require good exposure to business networks.

2.3.3.8 Barriers to growth in women-owned businesses

Women-owned businesses are significantly smaller globally and normally necessity driven and they typically operate in the lower productivity sector with lower income potential and lower employment. Data from World Bank surveys revealed that women-owned businesses are lower growth enterprises in comparison to the high-growth men-owned business profiles, with lower sales and employment (World Bank, 2014:5).

Meyer (2009:31) mentioned the importance of strategies for conflict management in family responsibility and work life balance that are significant to the growth of women enterprises. The researcher highlighted the importance of strategies such as role sharing and support with family responsibility.

The female business growth is influenced by constraint-driven factors. Female entrepreneurs often engage in new venture start-ups with lower experience and management skills, less capital and limited access to credit (World Bank, 2014:7).

Zotto and Gustafsson (2007:1) highlighted that the primary objective of any business is to increase profitability and grow their business. The researcher mentioned that improving of competitiveness, creation of new markets, enhancing of efficiency within operations would require creativity, cognitive skills, education and talent to drive innovation.

Meyer (2009:31) highlighted that for women entrepreneurs to grow, they need to improve their technical skills and capability, and emphasised the importance of these skills in entrepreneurial growth. The researcher further stated that women often outperformed men when they have a good and well-defined business opportunity with good management experience.

2.3.3.9 Personal challenges

Meyer and Landsberg (2015:3858) stated that a barrier often found in women entrepreneurs is a lack of self-confidence in comparison to men; even when they are equal with males with regard to business practise, and despite level of education and work status. The researchers further highlighted that women are often perceived as less capable in comparison to men in the business field.

Research by Garg and Duvenhage (2014:453) revealed a diversity of economic, social and psychological factors, which motivate individuals to self-employment. Success factors relate to women's training and formal education. Kelley *et al.* (2010:28) explained that the risk of failure is a significant barrier to the women entrepreneurial success and often cause women not to respond to opportunities that could contribute to successful businesses. Anwar and Rashid (2012:8) also recognised fear of failure in a high proportion of females; however, they say that women entrepreneurs are open to challenges and driven to succeed.

Meyer and Landsberg (2015:3858) indicated two contributing factors that influence an individual's decision to start a new business venture. The researcher regarded "perceived opportunities" as economic related conditions and "perceived capabilities" as attributes of the

individual and state that women often perceive themselves as not having the capability and experience to engage in successful business ventures. The researcher also mentioned contributing factors such as fear of failure that often relates to the fear of rejection from society should they not succeed.

2.3.4 Success strategies for women entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs create a culture of information sharing and motivate new women entrepreneurs, who want to engage in businesses, to work towards growth and sustainability. They recommend information sharing as a strategy to assist in overcoming of barriers to entrepreneurial and business success (Foster, 2016:85).

Women entrepreneurs are effective leaders and tend to follow a more democratic approach to leadership than men. Women build trust networks within their work force through an interactive transformational leadership style. They empower their stakeholders through strategic intent and create a supportive organisational structure that promotes business growth (Anwar & Rashid, 2012:14).

Women entrepreneurs develop various strategies to effectively overcome barriers to entrepreneurial success and often acknowledge personal and managerial success factors (Deborah *et al.*, 2015:41).

2.3.4.1 Personal success factors

Women entrepreneurs highlight the motivational factor to create sustainable and effective operational businesses by developing strategies that promote and support growth with focus on all the stakeholders. Women entrepreneurs recommend that one does not only require a vision to start your career in entrepreneurship but that you also require a desire to own your own business. Women entrepreneurs view passion for owning your own business as the driving force to achieve sustainability and business success; while also balancing your work and family responsibility (Foster, 2016:85).

Women entrepreneurs recommend that entrepreneurs have passion and determination and to follow a goal directed approach; commit to hard work, be honest and motivated. Women

entrepreneurs are caring leaders with the ability to drive change and portray the role of mentor and coach (Hin, Isa & Hasim, 2012:631).

Meyer (2006:17) supported an early study conducted by Mirchandani (1999:226), which revealed that women entrepreneurs are tolerant, have a high flexibility propensity and also support the findings of (Hin *et al.*, 2012:631) who indicated that women entrepreneurs are goal-oriented. Meyer (2006:17) further highlighted women entrepreneurs are creative, tend to have realistic outlooks and are energetic. These factors contribute to women engaging in successful businesses, not only to generate profits but also to enhance social and employee welfare within communities and the business environment respectively.

Studies by Anwar and Rashid (2012:14) revealed that women can become successful entrepreneurs and have an added advantage of being a risk taker, who will take on challenges with determination and follow a goal directed strategy to business success.

A study conducted by Tadria (2007:8), revealed that women entrepreneurs are individuals that are content, are mostly happily married; who feel a sense of pride in their ability as organisers of their homes and businesses, who contribute to business success. The women entrepreneurs however recommend that women do not enter into business partnerships with husbands.

A study performed by KPMG revealed that out of a survey of 204 women entrepreneurs, leading from the top 5000 listed companies globally, women regarded hard work and the ability to persevere in a challenging environment as the most significant contributor to business success (KMPG, 2015:2). Deborah *et al.* (2015:42) regarded perseverance to make a business work regardless of the challenges within the business, one of the most important contributors to success. Perseverance need to be directly linked to a positive outlook to overcome barriers to entrepreneurial success. True entrepreneurs are individuals who are born with the quality of perseverance, who are able to stand up after failure.

According to Deborah *et al.* (2015:42), a positive attitude contributes to good customer relationship and promotes a sense of positivity and appreciation towards women within her business. The researchers' highlighted that customers want to conduct business with positive women who believe in their product and business.

Verwey (2006:4) highlights that with the right attitude women will be able to build on their skills, enhance networking abilities and manage their businesses effectively. The right organisation culture will promote direction and leadership, and promote growth within their businesses.

In a study conducted by Hoe *et al.* (2012:137), women entrepreneurs revealed the personal factors that contributed to business success as passion toward entrepreneurship; interest; self-fulfilment; knowing your weakness; having the ability to develop and grow oneself; having good relationship with stakeholders; building and empowering your employees, being flexible, being different; being open minded and innovative; having self-confidence, relying on God, working hard and not giving up in the face of failure, taking risks, possessing good communication skills, being honest and trust worthy and being highly motivated.

2.3.4.2 Managerial factors

In a study conducted by Hoe *et al.* (2012:137) women entrepreneurs revealed their success strategies as engagement in business growth, good leadership style and effectively utilising all factors of production including, capital, employees and operational processes. Women recommend leaders to provide guidelines, to empower and direct employees to business success. Women recommend a democratic leadership style to achieve aforementioned objectives.

Deborah *et al.* (2015:42) highlight that successful women need to employ efficient managerial skills and take decisions regarding their products, the target market and the location to distribute their products.

In a study conducted by Tadria (2007:4), women entrepreneurs state that success relies on effective managerial strategies within the managerial function. Women regard good employee relationships, reliability, hard work, honesty, and truth worthiness as key to successful businesses (Tadria, 2007:4).

2.3.4.3 Business knowledge and skill

Deborah *et al.* (2015:42) revealed that women entrepreneurs in general have sufficient understanding, skills and knowledge and skills pertaining to their enterprise to ensure business success. Women are well aware of their shortcomings and often rely on outside consultants to provide advice and guidance for improved performances. The researchers highlighted the importance of experience before new venture start-ups and explained that it is the foundation to success. Women often work in the same industry before they engage in entrepreneurial endeavours. The researcher explained that women use resources in and outside of their business to engage in business operations and highlight the importance of training and attending conferences and seminars to enhance efficient business operations.

Foster (2016:86) recommends that women, wanting to succeed, need to focus on their stakeholders, including their customers and employees, to add sustainability and growth to their businesses. Customer and employee's satisfaction are important to women in business for a relaxed customer friendly environment. The researcher revealed that out of 87 participants in a study, the most important theme for women entrepreneurs was employee satisfaction, which in return promotes quality customer service. The researcher recommended that women attend workshops and seminars to create sustainability within their business.

Tadria (2007:6) revealed that most women feel they are pushed into becoming entrepreneurs. They have the ability to succeed because they would select an enterprise for which they had the proper ability, passion and skill set. The importance of business success relates to the selection of an enterprise in which the entrepreneur has passion or skills.

Deborah *et al.* (2015:42) documented that women identified a significant success strategy as knowing the competitors. The researcher explained that women entrepreneurs identify their competitors, follow their strategies and identify their position in the market. Information on competitors is significant for any enterprise moving towards growth and stability.

Van Scheers (2011:5056) recommends entrepreneurs engage in market research and recommends women to:

- Perform market research to determine the need of the consumer;

- Invest in a sound marketing strategy where they analyse their competitive advantage and identify their value proposition;
- Determine the target market;
- Perform a market mix with the objective of satisfying target customer's needs.

The researcher further highlighted that the business owner perform regular assessment on performance in which the owner ask the following key questions:

1. Does the enterprise focus on the customer?
2. Do employees satisfy customer needs and add value to ensure customer comebacks?
3. Does the enterprise provide products and services at competitive prices that are easily available?
4. Which is the enterprise's unique selling proposition (USP)?

Women entrepreneurs need to identify their core capabilities and competitive advantage by identifying the existing customers' preference of their products. It is further important to ensure they have a competitive advantage, offering superior products and services, differentiating themselves from the competitors (Deborah *et al.*, 2015:42).

An earlier study by Botha (2006:243) revealed that women entrepreneurs believe superior product and service delivering, customer care and satisfaction, high quality products and services as well as adequate training for the entrepreneur and her employees will contribute to business success.

2.3.4.4 Financial management

Chinomona and Maziriri (2015:841) stated that women entrepreneurs have many ways to obtain financial assistance and refer to subsidised or guaranteed loans to credit benefactors, tax credits and grants with added exemption on business registration costs. Women should investigate government assistance through specific subsidies initiatives, counselling and consulting support.

Iwu and Nxopo (2015:10) argued that government initiatives failed to improve access to finance for women entrepreneurs. The women entrepreneurs highlight the importance of

financial and managerial skills to obtain funding for themselves and their benefactors to promote and support entrepreneurial endeavours. Deborah *et al.* (2015:42) also mentioned the importance of accounting and financial management practice to ensure business success. Women require sound financial skills to engage in successful ventures. Women often rely on outside experts to perform this function.

Women entrepreneurs highlight the importance of sufficient financial resources and business management skills in new venture start-ups. These include sound bookkeeping skills, management of cash and investment in business expansion (Hoe *et al.*, 2012:138). An earlier study by Botha (2006:243) also highlighted the need for women entrepreneurs to require sufficient capital for business start-ups.

Verwey (2006:4) mentioned that a good cash flow is a significant factor for women in small business sustainability. The researcher's study revealed that women rely on their cash flow and prospered as a result of sound cash flow management.

2.3.4.5 Human Relations

Women entrepreneurs rely on capable and skilled human resources to support business and managerial implementation processes and depend on proper human resource departments to recruit, motivate and train employees using performance measurement and monitoring programs (Hoe *et al.*, 2012:138).

Irene (2016:76) states the woman entrepreneur requires her employees to be committed to the business and to take responsibility for her customers in the same way that she does.

Chinomona and Maziriri (2015:841) recommend women entrepreneurs follow the Gary Becker human capital theory that refer to "the stored value of knowledge or skills of members of the workforce." Heckman (2000:3) states that the theory relates to factors in the production process, which include past experience, business knowledge, time and skill, and further advised that productivity of employees will increase through education and training. Chinomona and Maziriri (2015:841) explained that, should women follow this theory, it will influence the type of businesses they start, concern previous business experiences, the field and level of education. The researchers further suggested the workforce requires the

knowledge and skill in the specific field of trade; this in turn leads to improved production and business success.

Deborah *et al.* (2015:41) recommend that successful women entrepreneurs promote healthy relationships between their stakeholders, be team builders and support individuals' self-worth by emotionally rewarding individuals for their accomplishments. Women in general have good people skills; they encourage people, and know how to form a contact network for future support. The researchers explained that successful women entrepreneurs regard business relationships as significant and they maintain good customer and employee relationships with focus on goodwill in the long-term, and emphasises this as a contributing factor to entrepreneurial success especially in developing countries.

Emrich (2015:100) recommended that women create a work environment where employees are highly motivated. Business owners need motivated employees with networks to provide required resources and to set priority to innovation. The study further revealed women felt that highly motivated employees will share similar goals to the owner of the business.

2.3.4.6 Networking

Networking is an important instrument for the women entrepreneur. Women, contrary to men, measure success in terms of qualitative factors, which include self-fulfilment, ratings on customer service surveys and increases in job creation while men often measure their success in terms of quantitative factors, which includes turnover, market share and profitability (Chiloane-Tsoka & Mello, 2011:1449).

Emrich (2015:100) recommended that women business owners network with successful women entrepreneurs and business owners before new venture start-ups. The researcher highlights motivation and networking with employees to promote the generation of innovative business ideas and regard mentorship with other women owners as significant. The researcher further highlight that women need to network with other women who engage in high profit ventures before new venture start-ups. The researcher's study revealed that women regard networking as a significant resource within their business. Women in the study recommended that all women should first work with other women in business and use information sharing as a strategy to engage in a new business formation. The researcher places emphasis on learning

and information sharing and need to learn financial strategies to promote growth and profitability within their business.

Women entrepreneurs emphasise the importance of business associations and networks by mentioning that networking contributed to their business success where women would often share business information and objectives (Hoe *et al.*, 2012:137).

The European Institute of Gender Equality Report (2016:6) also recognised that women entrepreneurs increasingly understand the importance of professional networking within their businesses. The report revealed that women entrepreneurs still have inferior and limited access to network resources and often belong to smaller networks in comparison to men who invest in the development and sustainable networking. Women often engage in less innovative and technical fields than men, are under-represented and have less relevant business experience. The report further revealed that women also have less time due to family and domestic responsibility resulting in less time for networking. In contrast to the finding, a study performed by Stander (2015:58) revealed women entrepreneurs engage in various online networking activities and states that “Networking creates a kind of online community. This takes place in the form of engagement. Visiting other people and brands’ websites, Instagram and Facebook Pages, liking them and sharing their posts stimulate a form of online communication. Entrepreneurs do not purely talk about themselves on social media; they also talk about other people’s products and brands. This creates awareness and reciprocity and may lead to free marketing opportunities”. The researcher however also stated that her research participants came from privileged backgrounds (Stander, 2015:63). In addition, Stander (2015:92) highlights women entrepreneurs should engage in networking activities and in the process receive mentorship regarding business support.

2.3.4.7 Risk Orientation

Deborah *et al.* (2015:42) explained that successful women entrepreneurs are willing to take risk; however they critically evaluate the risk and innovation. The researchers highlighted the strong correlation between the entrepreneur prepared to take the risk and innovation and found that a fear of taking risks will create a barrier for innovation. Unsuccessful women entrepreneurs do not take risks and often make impulsive decisions without contemplation. The researcher further explained that successful women entrepreneurs evaluate opportunities

and avoid those opportunities that have a high probability of failure, irrespective of the return expected. In contrast to Deborah *et al.* (2015:42), Stander (2015) states that women entrepreneurs' fear of failure are higher than men are and they often engage in lower risk business activities (Stander, 2015:34).

According to Yilmaz, Özdemir and Oraman (2012:7900), women entrepreneurs regard certain personal characteristics as important to ensure sustainability and business success, which include a willingness to take risks with a vision, self-confidence and the ability to solve problems. Deborah *et al.* (2015:42) further highlighted that women entrepreneurs make use of information to control their businesses. Women tend to distribute financial risk by involving other venture capitalists that may lead to a high probability of losing control over their businesses.

Women entrepreneurs require enhanced innovative and strategic direction. Women often do not take risks due to high family responsibility. Women need to challenge themselves and take risks, and view barriers to entrepreneurship as a process to development of business growth (Tadria, 2007:4).

2.3.4.8 Creativity and innovation

Innovation is a process of identifying the best ideas and acting upon them, which in return, generates creative ideas, which lead to innovative actions. Innovation is the foundation for any successful entrepreneur and leads to a transformation process. Innovation leads to transformation of creative and original ideas into new standards, which in return transforms ideas into new standards of doing things. Innovation requires creativity and without innovation, an enterprise will become antediluvian. Innovation is a process where ideas combined with knowledge create new values (Okpara, 2007:5).

A study conducted by Hin, Isa and Hasim (2012:632) on women entrepreneurs in Malaysia, revealed that women entrepreneurs use innovation to start their business ventures and highlights the following:

- Women perform an assessment of needs within the community.
- Women entrepreneurs want to resolve specific problems.

- Travelling in a foreign country, observing the international trend and comparing with local competitors.
- Women business owners identify their customers and business needs.
- Women attend conferences and seminars to identify new opportunities and supporting organisations.
- Women entrepreneurs investigate ideas within the markets.
- Women perform research on new developments and research.
- Women engage in networking activities.

Women enterprises cannot succeed without innovation and innovation cannot function without creativity. Individuals become creative by motivation from personal interest, self-fulfilment and without pressure from external parties. They challenge the given situation with passion and awareness. The researcher explained that creativity functions around three mechanisms: the mechanism of expertise, the ability to think creatively and the motivation drive factor (Okpara, 2007:4).

Deborah *et al.* (2015:41) explained women use their creativity to alter, and or improve her products, evaluate existing procedures, assist in identifying solutions to problems, recognise opportunities and to formulate new ideas. The researchers regarded innovation as the driving factor for new concepts and ideas. The researchers further highlighted that entrepreneurs carry risks with the expectation to have profitable returns and often creatively alter innovations in external markets.

2.3.4.9 Training and education

Derera, Chitakunye and O'Neill (2014:323) highlighted the importance of knowledge because it serves as a strategic resource that provides sustainability within a business and provides a competitive advantage. Knowledge creates the potential for women entrepreneurs to flourish. The researchers further explained that women acquire improved knowledge when starting their business ventures, which may often be a significant barrier to start-up ventures.

GEM 2017 report revealed that women have a higher business failure rate with lower growth prospects due to challenges relating to sustainable business engagement. The report revealed

training programs and coaching on access to business resources, including financing and growth assets, might support women entrepreneurs in starting new ventures, and moving towards growth and sustainability. Training opportunities for women entrepreneurs need to improve. Investors, finance and resource providers need to reassess perceptions and bias when making decisions on funding which may affect unfair decision making, whether it is policies, securities required or credit scoring (Kelley *et al.*, 2017:52).

Botha (2006:146) recommended that training in women entrepreneurship programs should focus on financial and management support, coaching and mentorship, and include training on enhancement of networking within her business. Botha (2006:146) highlights that when education and training is cultivated among women entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial activity among women will increase.

2.3.4.10 Commitment

Irene (2016:76) stated that an entrepreneur requires commitment and personal strength, the ability to set and achieve goals, to overcome barriers to entrepreneurial success. The researcher provided explanations on how to achieve success through the women’s commitment and is illustrated by Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Examples of behaviours that delineate the commitment competency

Clusters	Behaviours
Stay focused even in the face of failure;	“An ability to stay focused and not be distracted by difficulties encountered in the course of running the business. An ability to restart the business again if it fails due to inability to plan or commit to goals”
Commit to hard work;	“An ability to sustain one’s effort and commitment to the business even during internal and external crises and a tough competitive environment. Devote time to the business.”
Commit to good business practices and belief and values;	“Commit to the business for fulfilling personal values and beliefs regardless of competitor’s behaviours or pressure.”
Commit to employees and customers;	“An ability to commit to the business by being responsible for employees and ensuring their wellbeing. Committing to customers.”

Commit to the long-term goals;	“An ability to commit to long term goals rather than short term goals.”
Commit to the business strategy.	“An ability to commit to the business strategy and follow through to implement it.”

Source: Table from Irene (2016:76)

Deborah *et al.* (2015:42) regarded commitment as the ability and willingness to commit and utilise their personal resources within their ventures and mentioned that commitment in a business is a significant success factor. A business venture cannot grow on a part-time basis, requires total commitment from the individual, and requires effort and sacrifice.

2.3.4.11 Mentorship

Foster (2016:86) recommended that women entrepreneurs develop goals to expand and grow businesses, and recommended mentorship as a tool to support their growth objectives. The researched study revealed women used mentors to build the brand of their business and provided a financial platform in which they operated.

Emrich (2015:101) revealed that mentorship provides women entrepreneurs with the required business information to promote innovation and resources important to the business. Shared resources between women are important and could contribute to an environment where women can increase their profitability.

Researchers from KMPG (2015:5) found that women regard mentorship as a significant contributing factor to women’s business success but women often struggle to find mentors in high-level positions, which are readily available. The researchers recommended women entrepreneurs find good mentors, regardless of gender, who may contribute valuable insight in engaging in successful business ventures.

2.3.4.12 Religion

The relationship between religion and economics is difficult to determine. Earlier scholars such as Adam Smith and Max Weber recognised the influential role that religion has on economics. Little recognition is given to religion as a determining factor of trade and industry,

and the researcher Edmund Phelps stated the following “values and attitudes are as much a part of the economy as institutions and policies are. Some impede, others enable” (Audretsch, Boente & Tamvada, 2007:2).

Holland (2015:17) stated that religion contributes to motive and an entrepreneurial culture. The researcher used the United States as an example where religion was found to be a determinant in various top women entrepreneurs, including successful women entrepreneurs such as Estee Lauder, “Truett Cathy (Chick-fil-A restaurants)” and “Mary Kay (Mary Kay Cosmetics range)”. The researcher highlighted the influence of the Protestant beliefs of “the glorification of God through hard work and the creation of wealth”. Religion influences social and traditional cultures leading to the progressive norms, values, behaviour and motivation (Holland, 2015:17).

Seabright (2016:217) highlighted the natural relationship between religion and entrepreneurship and referred to religious leadership as a form of entrepreneurial practise. The researcher state: “Successful entrepreneurship in many secular fields does typically involve qualities that are very important in religious communities, for example, passion, commitment, and often a degree of unreasonable optimism that things will turn out well.” The researcher further explained that religion in entrepreneurship manifests itself in different ways, and recommended the exploration of religion and global developments in the 21st century.

2.4 SUMMARY

The researcher introduced the concept of entrepreneurship in chapter two with specific focus on women entrepreneurship. Based on existing literature, the researcher first provided an introduction into entrepreneurship and explored the concepts surrounding the definition of the entrepreneur and the entrepreneurial process.

The researcher further reviewed the GEM 2016/2017 report on the status of entrepreneurship in South Africa and investigated the Schumpeter’s theory on entrepreneurship. The researcher thereafter explored the field of women entrepreneurship, with specific focus on motivational factors; barriers for women entrepreneurs; and most importantly, strategies for women entrepreneurs moving towards growth and sustainability.

Entrepreneurship provides women the opportunity to control her own destiny, to contribute to society and economic growth, and in the process create jobs for the unemployed. The researcher regards the development of the woman entrepreneur as fundamental to growth within an economy and recognises these women create an overall welfare for people and their communities.

The literature review provided valuable insights into the field of entrepreneurship and further provided the foundation to explore the topic of women as entrepreneur and business owner. The researcher also found that many studies relate to women entrepreneurship, however, recognise that researchers mainly focus on the characteristic of the woman entrepreneur, motivational factors and barriers to women entrepreneurship and neglect to investigate success strategies women entrepreneurs use to navigate themselves to business growth and sustainability.

The literature study revealed the South African women pursuing their careers in the field of entrepreneurship are on the increase. Literature revealed women often resort to becoming entrepreneurs to have flexibility around family and domestic responsibility; however lack the necessary information, experience, role models, management and business skills, which often lead to business failure. Women entrepreneurs are driven by passion, success, innovativeness and commitment to hard work, which in return contributes to opportunity identification, provides a method to overcome entrepreneurial barriers and support women in growing and sustaining their business. The literature in addition provides evidence that religion has an impact on women entrepreneurial endeavours and is often neglected by researchers.

In conclusion, the researcher regard entrepreneurship is the driving force for economic growth and development; however recognises the multi-dimensional elements of entrepreneurship, with numerous challenges particularly in developing countries. South Africa has a diverse population with different cultures and social norms, which greatly affect entrepreneurial endeavours, which have specific implications for the woman entrepreneur. The researcher concluded chapter two by documenting success strategies women entrepreneurs use to ensure growth and sustainability within their businesses.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The study follows a transcendental phenomenological approach to explore the challenges and strategies of 15 Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs who successfully managed their businesses beyond 3.5 years.

The researcher used a thematic analysis method, which supported the research methodology and served as a data analysis tool. This allowed the researcher to identify features within the cluster of data and to categorise the prominent features within the relevant and identified themes. The researcher thereafter analysed the data to ensure the validity of data meets the research objectives.

This chapter secondly addressed predetermined research questions by evaluation of the results obtained from the empirical study. The researcher used the evidence from the study to either substantiate or disapprove of information found in the literature.

The researcher discussed the insight obtained from the study, and considered data, conflicting with the literature, as valuable for the current and for future studies in women entrepreneurship. The similarities and dissimilarities found in study and the literature was considered, which led to a more detailed discussion in chapter 4. The researcher recognised the limitation of a qualitative research design in the limited sample population of 15 women entrepreneurs and in, evaluating only business activities in the Vaal Triangle. The field of entrepreneurship further is complex with different entrepreneurial fundamentals, and the researcher found it difficult to prove some theories and disapprove of others. The researcher attempted to gain perspectives from literature and empirical research.

The primary research consisted of the following two questions:

Research Question 1: Which strategies do Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs employ to navigate beyond 3.5 years of business success?

Research Question 2: How does qualitative practical theory contribute to women entrepreneurial learning and development?

The researcher now presents the general profile of the women entrepreneurs interviewed and respective of their business characteristics.

3.2 GATHERING AND EXPLICITATION OF DATA

The researcher provides a detailed explanation to the gathering and the explicitation of data method used in this section.

3.2.1 Research participants

The researcher selected 15 women entrepreneurs who are running successful businesses in the Vaal Triangle area for at least 3.5 years and conducted long phenomenological interviews with them. The women entrepreneurs engaged in various business activities in different industries. The researcher regarded it important to select different industries to explore and understand woman operating in different sectors in the Vaal Triangle.

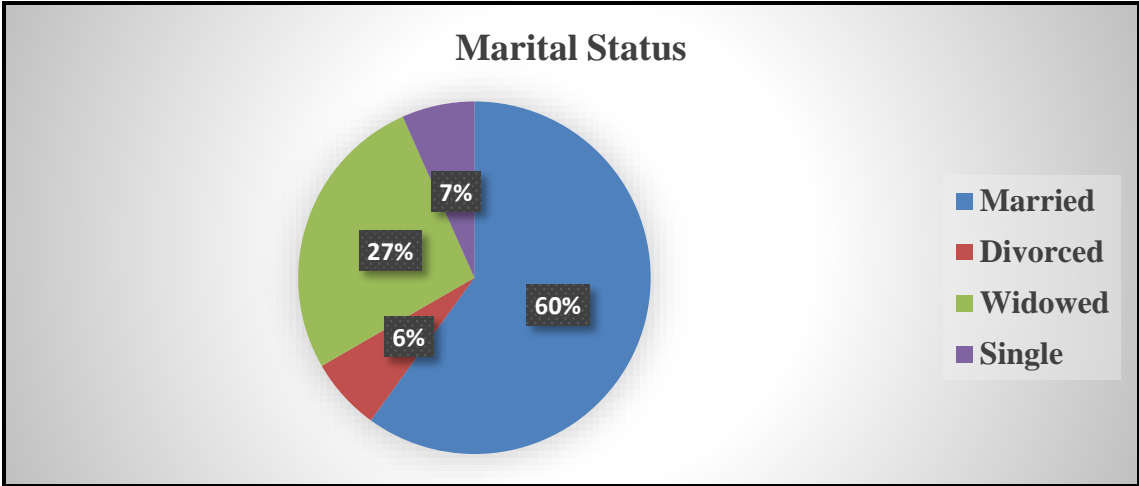
The researcher categorised the participants' profiles into two sections, namely the personal profile and the business profile. The researcher used figures to illustrate the personal and business profiles of these women participants. Figures 3.1 to 3.5 represent the personal profiles and figures 3.6 to 3.11 present the business profiles.

Participant's personal profile

3.2.1.1. Marital Status

Figure 3.1 illustrates the marital status of the women participants.

Figure 3.1 Marital statuses of Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs interviewed



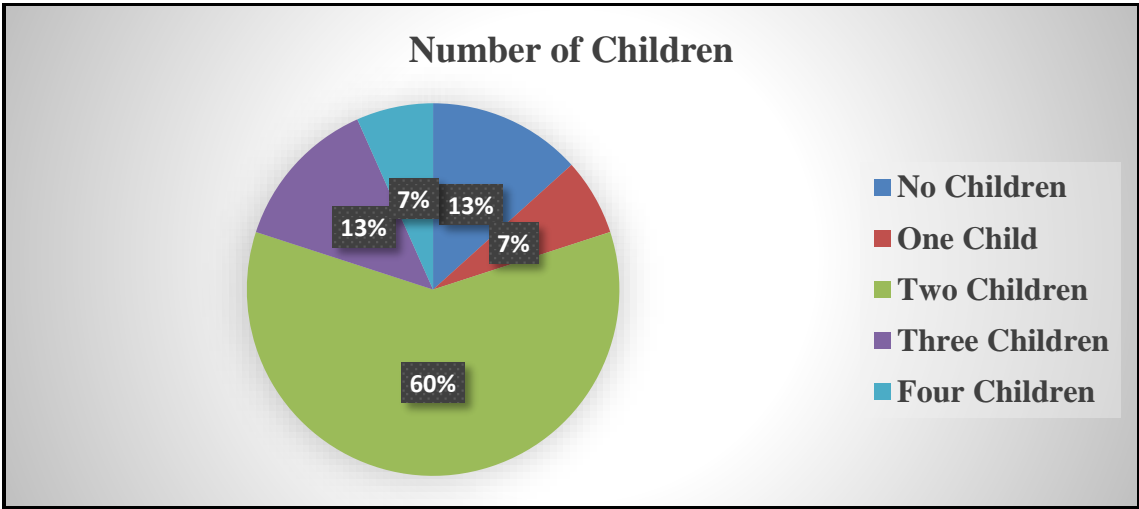
Source: Compiled by the researcher

The sample population consisted of a majority of married women participants (60%). Two of the participants were divorced, of which one remarried (6%) and 29% are widowed. Only 7% of the population is single.

3.2.1.2. Number of Children

The following graph illustrates the number of children the women participants have.

Figure 3.2 Number of children



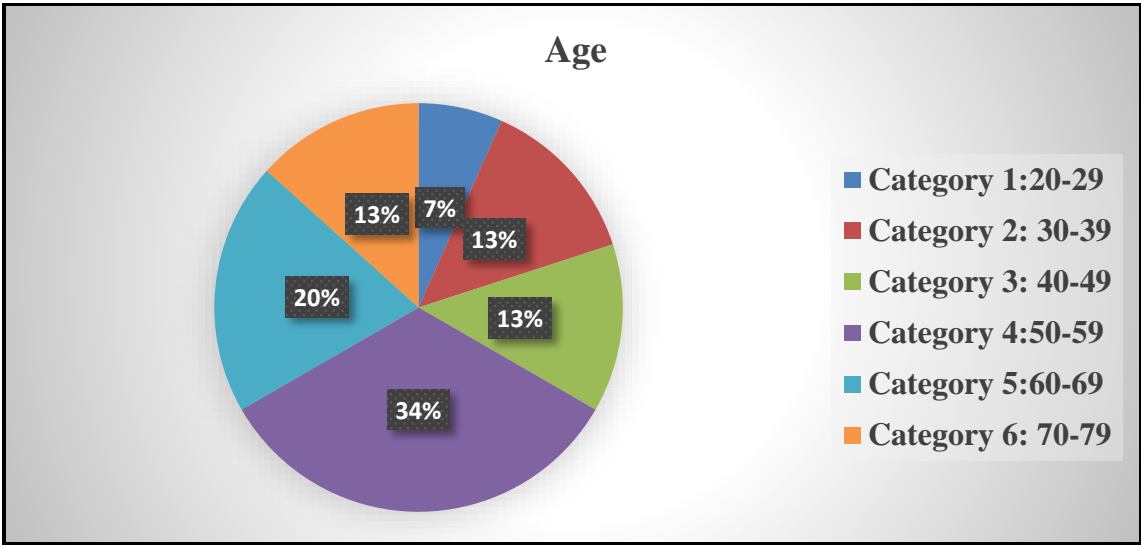
Source: Compiled by the researcher

The majority of the women interviewed are married (60%) and have two children (60%) in their household. Women participants with three children represent 13% of the population, and women who do not have any children similarly represent 13%.

3.2.1.3 Age of the women participants

The following graph illustrates the age categories of the women participants.

Figure 3.3 Age categories of Vaal Triangle women participants



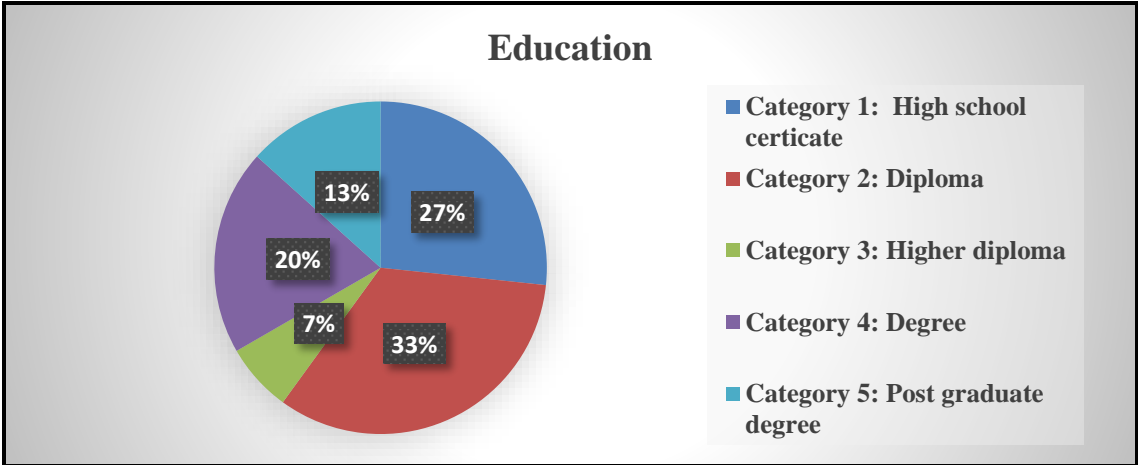
Source: Compiled by the researcher

Most of the women participants interviewed fall in Categories 4 and 5 in the age ranges of 50 to 59 (34%) and 60 to 69 (20%) years old respectively.

3.2.1.4 Education

The following graph illustrates the education levels of the women participants.

Figure 3.4 Education levels of the women participants



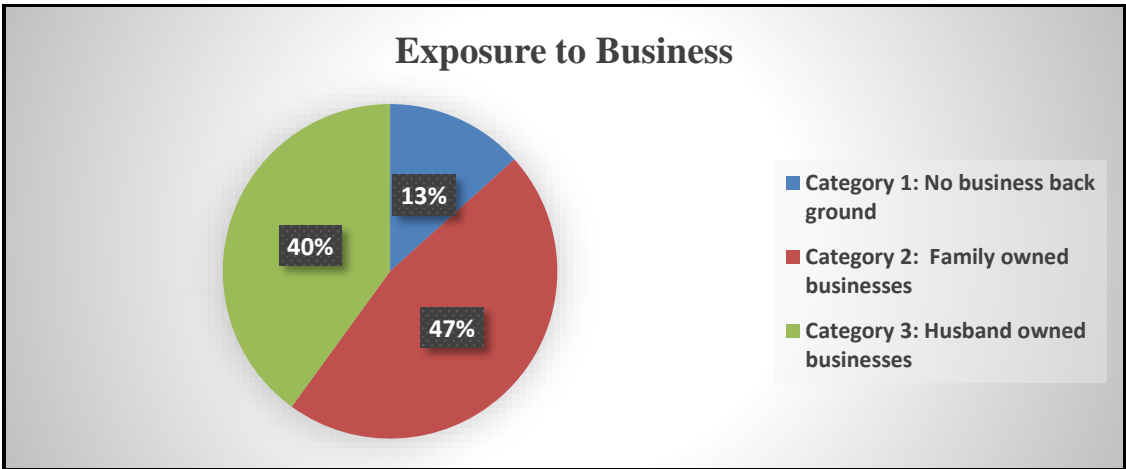
Source: Compiled by the researcher

The majority of the women are educated with either a diploma (33%) or degree (20%). Only 27% of the women have a high school certificate and 13% have a postgraduate degree and represent two chartered accountants.

3.2.1.5. Exposure to business

The following figure represents the women participants' exposure to business.

Figure 3.5 Exposure to business



Source: Compiled by the researcher

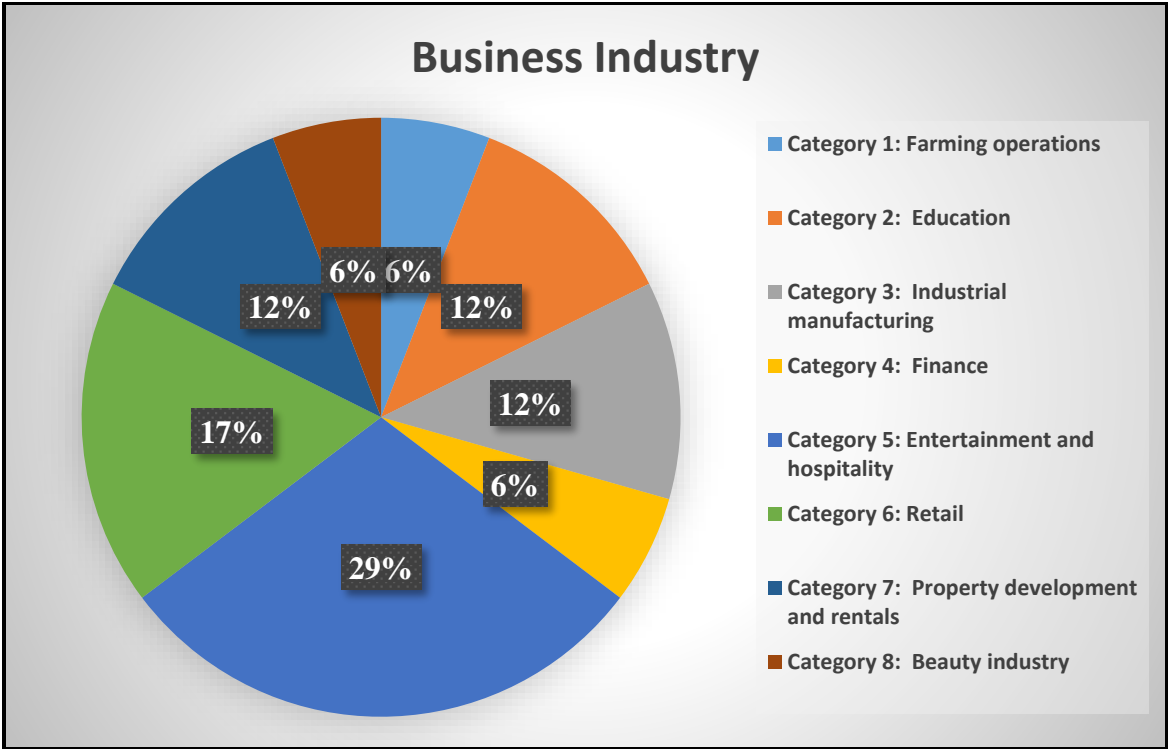
The majority of women participants did have exposure to business, prior to starting their own businesses. Results revealed that 47% of women were exposed to business through family businesses and 40% of the participants were exposed to business through their husbands' businesses. Only 13% of the population represents women that were not exposed to business prior to starting their own.

Participants business profiles

3.2.1.1 Nature of the Business

The following figure represents the business industry in which the women operate.

Figure 3.6: Business industry



Source: Compiled by the researcher

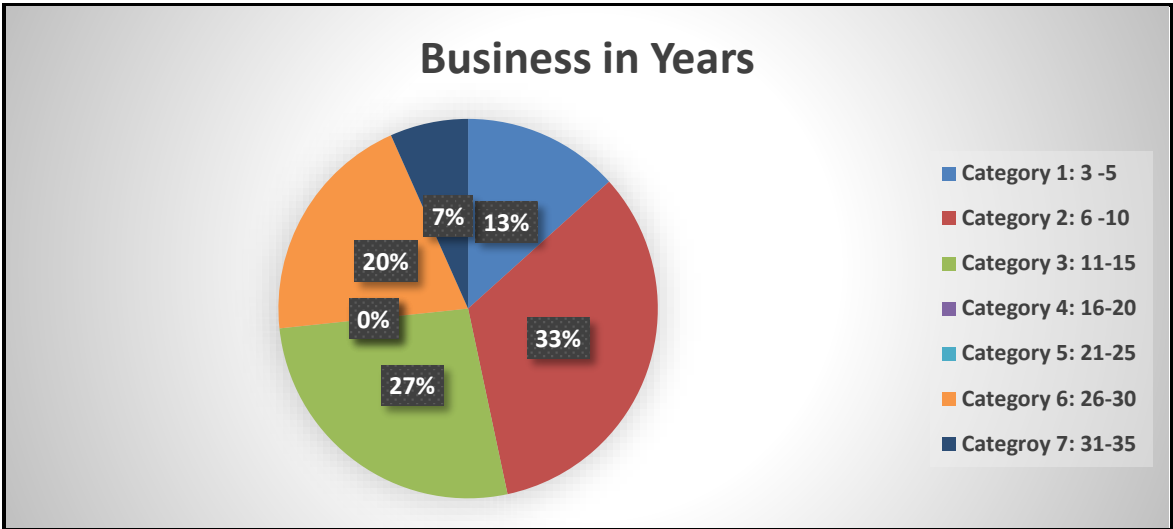
The majority of the women interviewed are in the entertainment and hospitality industry (29%). The second largest category pertains to the retail industry (17%). The results show that 12% of the women are in industrial manufacturing, 12% are in property development, rentals,

and 12% in education. The minority of the women engaged in farming operations and present 7% of the population, the beauty industry (6%) and 6% in finance industry.

3.2.1.2 Age of the business

The following figure represents the number of years that the businesses were successfully running.

Figure 3.7: Business lifetime in years



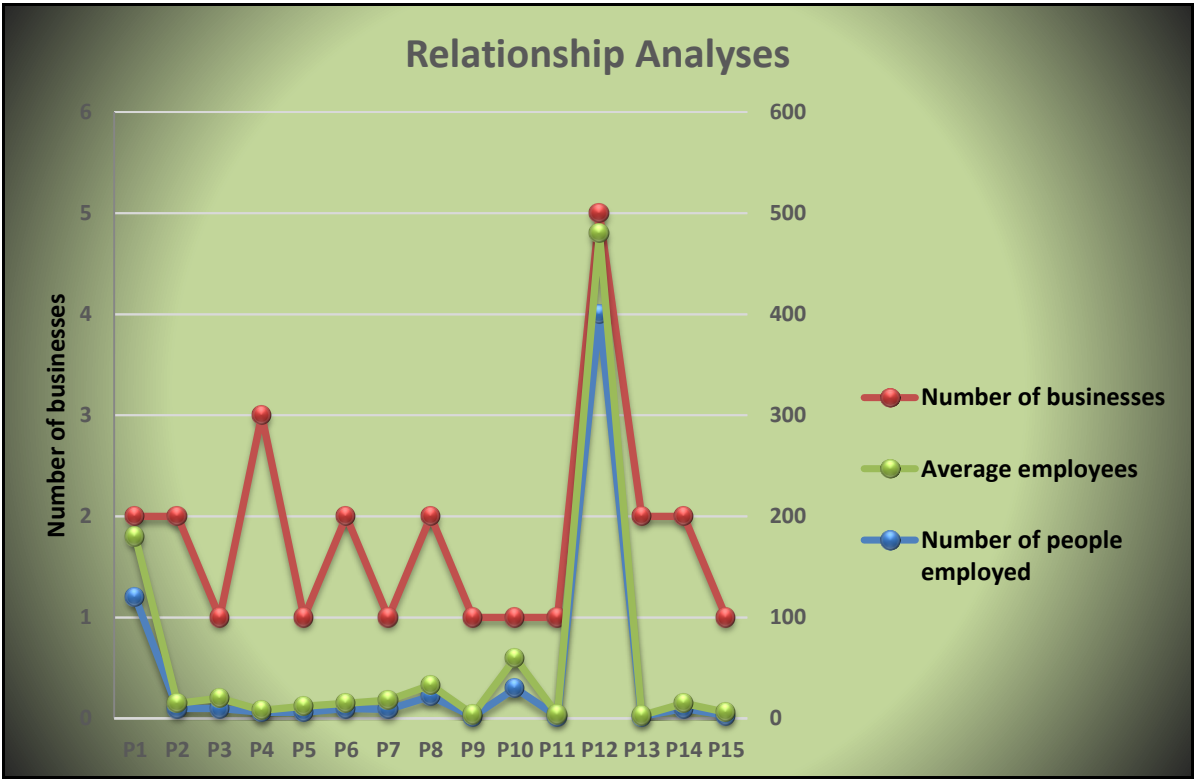
Source: Compiled by the researcher

The majority of the businesses are aged between 6 and 10 years and represents 33% of the population. The second largest category of businesses aged between 11 and 15 years, representing 27% of the population. The results revealed that only 20% of the population represents business age at 26-30 years, 13% at 3.5-5 years, and 7% at 31-35 years.

3.2.1.3 Number of businesses, average employees and total employees

The following graph (3.1) illustrates the number of businesses these women participants own, the average and total number of staff members employed. The researcher presented the graphs together to provide a comprehensive overview.

Graph 3.1: Relationship analysis – an overview of number of businesses, the average and total number of staff employed



Source: Compiled by the researcher

Table 3.1 Number of businesses and people employed

Participant	Number of people employed	Number of businesses	Average number of employees per business
P01 (pilot study)	120	2	60
P02 (pilot study)	10	2	5
P03 (pilot study)	10	1	10
P04	6	3	2
P05	6	1	6
P06	10	2	5
P07	9	1	9
P08	22	2	11
P09	2	1	2
P10	30	1	30
P11	2	1	2
P12	400	5	80
P13	2	2	1
P14	10	2	5
P15	3	1	3

Source: Compiled by the researcher

Graph 3.1 revealed that Participant P01 and P12 employed 120 and 400 staff members respectively. Participant P01 trades in agricultural farming and P12 in the franchise food industry. Participant P12 also develops, sell and rent residential properties. These participants also employ the most staff members and also have the highest number of businesses. Table 3.1 provides a more detailed summary and also revealed that participants P01-P03 are three knowledgeable, experienced women entrepreneurs who assisted the researcher in enhancing the interview questions. The researcher also considered the economic impact and documented the estimated economic impact in section 3.4.

3.2.2 Encoding

The researcher conducted the interviews, thereafter transcribed and encoded the data using Atlas.ti software programme. The researcher combined the transcribed interviews and encoded each paragraph to ensure that all relevant codes were recorded and the researcher has a full complement of the interviews as prescribed by Braun and Clarke (2006:87).

The researcher used open coding to ensure that the data captured included all the prominent features. The researcher assigned codes to the identified, prominent features of the first ten interviews and required the researcher to code certain phrases (*in vivo*), thus incurring when certain phrases developed into a new code (Bryman *et al.*, 2015:301). The researcher used open coding on the first seven transcribed interviews, which resulted in 200 initial unique codes and thereafter inductively assigned unique codes to the remaining data.

3.2.3 Developing and reviewing themes

The researcher analysed the original list of 200 codes to determine prominent and emerging themes. These codes were categorised in groups based on code similarities. These codes generated twenty themes, however, during the review process, the researcher determined that certain themes were not significant and they were then reassigned. The final thematic analysis delivered the fifteen themes that emerged from the transcribed data.

3.2.4 Final Themes

After developing and reviewing the themes, the following fifteen themes emerged after the completion of the coding process:

- Theme 1: Motivation
- Theme 2: Innovation
- Theme 3: Education
- Theme 4: Commitment
- Theme 5: Religion
- Theme 6: Business challenges
- Theme 7: Planning and research
- Theme 8: Customers
- Theme 9: Financial strategy
- Theme 10: Required resources
- Theme 11: Change and adapt
- Theme 12: Growth and sustainability
- Theme 13: Networking
- Theme 14: Gender roles
- Theme 15: Information sharing

3.3 DISCUSSION OF THEMES

The researcher now discusses the prominent themes that emerged from the data. The themes also filtered into subthemes and the researcher substantiates them by the evidence obtained. The researcher referenced each participant with the letter (P), followed by a number in sequence of interviews performed, thus (P01-P15). This assigned reference safeguards the participant's identity.

3.3.1 Motivation to start a business

Motivation was the first theme that emerged from the data. Motivation relates to the reason these women entrepreneurs started their business venture. The women entrepreneurs had various reasons for creating business ventures and different sub themes emerged from the data.

Motivations for starting a business depends on “push” (out of necessity) or “pull” factors (out of opportunity) (SBP, 2013:4). “Pull” factors motivated most of these women. Only one participant indicated that an augmented income motivated her to start her business. Profit, money and wealth creation did not motivate these women to start a businesses, but rather passion, success and self-fulfilment.

3.3.1.1 The ideology of success and self-fulfilment

The ideology of success and self-fulfilment emerged as a sub theme of motivation. The ideology of success and self-fulfilment motivates women entrepreneurs and relates to the women’s determination to succeed and to have a sense of self-accomplishment. The self-fulfilment element relates to the women entrepreneurs’ desire to fulfil their ambitions through their own efforts and the sense of satisfaction they experienced after launching their successful business venture. Hardly any women participants indicated that their motivation for starting a business related to wealth creation or was driven by profitability factors, flexibility and independence. The findings support a study conducted by Tadhira (2007:4), which revealed that women are drawn to the ideology of success and that women were not motivated by economic gain.

In terms of the organisation, women entrepreneurs often regard commitment, taking care of your staff members’ wellbeing, hard work and perseverance as a success factor in business. Women in addition, experienced the “pull” factor to become entrepreneurs, mainly because of their need or passion to create, for self-fulfilment and self-accomplishment purposes.

Entrepreneurs have the desire to succeed, however, they require a personal strategy to guide them to achieve success, whether it is directly or indirectly. Success is also relative to the individual entrepreneur as many entrepreneurs perceive success in different ways. Evidence

suggests that the Vaal Triangle women wanted to prove that they are able to build successful business enterprises and prove themselves to family and friends. Women entrepreneurs showed that everybody wants to succeed in life, whether you are male or female.

“The key to success is the determination to succeed. It means you need to stand up if you have failed. I feel all women strive for success, whether it is in your family or in your business.”- P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

“I think everyone wants to succeed in their life. It does not matter whether you are male or female. We all have that desire.” -P05, Vanderbijlpark, 18 Jul. 08:00.

Past experiences in formal employment may trigger an individual's desire to become an entrepreneur and business owner. Participant P04 supported the statement and revealed that a manager from her former employment pointed out that she would never accomplish anything in her life. This triggered her to start her own business; she needed to prove her previous employer wrong and to herself that she is capable of success.

“After completing my diploma in accounting, my manager said that is how far I can go; and I would never succeed in anything. I actually need to thank her.” - P04, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Jul. 12:00

Some of the findings in the study contradict the findings of a study conducted at the North-West University in Vanderbijlpark, South Africa. This study discussed key motivations for women entrepreneurs for starting a business. None of the women researcher participants indicated that they wanted to start a business for the purpose of self-accomplishments (Meyer & Landsberg, 2015:3860). A study conducted by Kock (2008:102), further contradicted the aforementioned study, and confirmed that out of 80 women entrepreneurs, one of the top reasons for women becoming entrepreneurs are self-accomplishment. The ideology of success was also confirmed by a study performed in 2009, where 35 women entrepreneurs reported that the top motivational reasons pertain to self-accomplishment reasons (Meyer, 2009:61).

Individuals often require a creative outlet and in return, stimulate the entrepreneurial process. The interviews supported the statement and revealed women started their own business due to their creative nature; the need to create something different; and to provide a special service to

clients, a special service they wanted themselves but which was not available in the market. The research participants wanted to prove to people that they are able to build successful businesses by creating something different, and in the process find self-fulfilment.

“I always wanted to create. I am thankful that I was able to follow my passion and create a successful business out of it. It felt good.” - P02, Vaalpark, 03 Jul. 14:00.

“I always create. I am always thinking of something to create. I like to entertain people and started a business out of it.” - P15, Vereeniging, 08 Sept. 08:00

In some instances, women started out their businesses by using their passion for a hobby, and after numerous requests from friends and family, created and developed their hobby into a successful business venture. These women experienced a sense of self-accomplishment by starting up their own businesses and for the success of the business while doing something they love. Women received many mixed responses when they inquired from others whether the idea for a business would work. Some friends and family members encouraged their idea, while others indicated that their idea would never work. Negative feedback often triggers an individual to prove they can succeed. This was the case for some of these women entrepreneurs.

“If I were to listen to all the sceptical people out there, I would never have managed to open up my business. I originally started with a playpark and now I have a successful restaurant with a lot of happy mummies.” - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30

“I come from a Portuguese family and grew up in the family businesses. After working my required hours as a hairdresser, I wanted to open up my own hairdressing salon. There were many sceptics in my family. My family members granted me an interest-bearing loan. Many of my family members said I would not succeed. I paid my loan back and now I reflect on my business success.” - P05, Vanderbijlpark, 18 Jul. 08:00

Participants P03 and P09 indicated they originally started with a passion for their hobbies and now engage in successful businesses. They said their husbands refer to their businesses as their hobbies and the husbands neglect to recognise that they are actually successful businesswomen.

“My husband still refers to my business as a hobby. I constantly need to proof that I actually have a successful business.”- P03, Vanderbijlpark, 06 Jul. 12:00.

Hard work and perseverance with the determination to succeed, drive achievement and provide a sense of self-fulfilment for individuals. Success also pertains to oneself, as success is not measured by the worldly things we have, but rather conquering challenges and by self-accomplishment. The study provided strong evidence that women conquer challenges even in uncertain economic and environmental conditions.

Entrepreneurs are often subjected to lot of scepticism when starting up their business and require a certain personality trait that relates to the determination to succeed, the commitment to hard work. The women participants supported this statement and explained they constantly need to proof themselves, no matter how proud and successful they are in their business.

The findings in this study support Cantner *et al.* (2016:209) in explaining the theory of Schumpeter’s conceptual framework, where the authors regard the notion that entrepreneurship pertains to individuals who are energetic, who are initiators, who are able to adapt to change, overcome scepticism and challenge “social resistance”.

3.3.3.2 Passion

The passion for business and people as a sub-theme of motivation emerged from the data. The motivation for the majority of women entrepreneurs to start a new business venture relates to passion. The entrepreneur often starts a business by having a passion for business, people, creativity or just following a dream. The women interviewed supported the statement as most of the women have a passion for people, business, with a clear vision of what they actually wanted to achieve. The women further supported this statement and explained they have a passion to create and they were not interested in employment in the formal sector.

“I worked in an office and hated every moment of it. I started to organise all the functions at my work and realised I enjoyed it. After a few years, I was promoted to a human resource manager but I rather wanted to go and sit in a coffee shop and create than to stare at these four walls. The pin that I am wearing today, I created a few years back, and now it is selling

like hot cakes on the arts and crafts market. I have a passion to create. You also need to believe in your product.” - P02, Vaalpark, 03 Jul. 14:00.

Passion often drives the motivation of an individual to become an entrepreneur and create an entrepreneurial culture where information sharing becomes an educational resource. When the researcher inquired which advice they would give to other women wanting to become an entrepreneur, one of the main emerging themes were passion for your product and all your stakeholders.

A qualitative study conducted by Ingrid Verwey (2006:34) on women entrepreneurs in construction confirmed this finding, where she found that passion in the field they operate in, featured through the entire population of her study.

“My father said I need to study something professional and so I studied law but in the back of my mind I always hoped to have my own ballet studio one day. My passion for ballet drove me to open up my own studio. I started with 6 children, now have 74 children.” - P09, Vanderbijlpark, 09 Aug. 12:00.

Passion is also an important motivation for growing and sustaining a business. The majority of participants explained that if you have a passion for your product and your business, you would never have to work. Women entrepreneurs also showed an enormous passion for all their stakeholders. Participant P12 showed an element of stubbornness, passion and determination to follow her dream.

“I always wanted to become a businesswoman. I grew up in a family business in which our entire family worked. I did not want to go to a normal high school, I specifically wanted to go to a trade school but my father said he did not have the funds to send me to a trade school. I closed my bookcase for two months and did not go to school. My father thereafter realised that there is no way he was going to get out of it. I completed my education in the trade school, and received many bursaries from international companies to pursue my studies in computer science. I accepted a bursary; however, I did not finish my degree. I started to work for an American company and was intrigued by the way they do business. I started to sell insurance policies...I realised I have a passion for business.” - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

“You need a passion for your product and also believe in your product. I believe that if you have a passion for your product, you never have to work again. - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

Entrepreneurs often have a passion for people in poverty and perform an assessment of the needs within communities which can result in new venture start-ups. Hin *et al.* (2012:632) supported the statement by highlighting women entrepreneurs specifically, address poverty within their communities. The empirical study supports the findings, by revealing that some women participants started their businesses as welfare projects, which then ended up as businesses. These women have role models that greatly influenced their passion for uplifting of people in poverty.

“I started welfare projects in agriculture, as the Afrikaner needed upliftment from the depression in those years. Florence Nightingale and Emily Hobhouse inspired me... I have a passion for entrepreneurial people. My welfare projects provided me with numerous opportunities to form new businesses.” - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

“I have a passion to entertain people, to look after their needs. I always looked at Mother Theresa. She always looked after the people. My business is people”. - P15, Vereeniging, 08 Sept. 08:00.

Women entrepreneurs regard employees as a valuable and significant asset to grow and sustain a business and a number of them mentioned that it is your staff members who are looking after your clients. You need to look after the wellbeing of your staff for them to look after your clients.

“You need to uplift your staff, educate them to look after your clients... I have a passion for my clients, I realised that at an early age...I wanted to become a businesswoman... I have a passion for business.” - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

3.3.3.3 Flexibility

Flexibility as a subtheme of motivation emerged from the data. Flexibility subtheme refers to the how these women were motivated by flexibility to start a new business venture. Family

responsibilities have a significant impact on the motivation for a woman's decision to enter self-employment and are considerably more important to women than for men. According to Deborah *et al.* (2015:39), flexibility is a significant motivation for women with childcare responsibilities and that self-employment has the advantage of balancing work and family responsibility. In contrast, this study did not show flexibility to be a significant motivation for women to start up their business ventures but rather as a challenge to growing and sustaining businesses. Women entrepreneurs are often motivated by the expectation of flexibility surrounding family responsibility but once businesses are up and growing, the flexibility element disappears. This also, is one of the elements that prevent women entrepreneurs for wanting to grow their business, but rather to just sustain their businesses. Women often find it challenging to balance their work life with family responsibilities and resort to taking business administration home, and to work when the children go to bed. The results indicate that some women never experienced flexibility in their businesses, and cannot understand how other women can engage in business activities for flexibility reasons because running a business successfully is extremely demanding and time-consuming.

“There is no flexibility in my business; I have to see any woman being flexible in her business. I need to work, it is different in the hairdressing industry, and for every hour I work, I contribute to my monthly income.” - P05, Vanderbijlpark, 18 Jul. 08:00.

Women frequently referred to their husbands as their aid, support for family responsibilities, and highlight that the roles of husbands and wives have changed significantly. Husbands will now prepare supper and collect children from the school. The findings are consistent with the study conducted by Fortuin (2016:44) and Cheung and Halpern (2010:185), which revealed that women are often dependant on spousal relationships for support. Spousal support has a great influence on the success of entrepreneurs globally and proved evident in the findings of the research study.

“I am lucky to have a husband that prepares food every night. I take my work home, and when the children go to bed I do the administration for the day...I'm struggling to balance work and family life.” - P09, Vanderbijlpark, 09 Aug. 12:00.

Women entrepreneurs often take a hands-on approach when it comes to managing their businesses and do not rely solely on staff members to assist their customers. The study

supported this statement by revealing that the women want to grow their businesses, but lack trust in their employees to handle customer relations. This fact contributes to women entrepreneurs only sustaining rather than growing their businesses.

“I am the face of my business. When I start a new project, the architects and builders always want me to go with... I am not one of the cheapest providers, but my clients know my work and contractors expect me to be on site...There is not enough time in a day.” – P10, Vanderbijlpark, 10 Aug. 12:00.

Personal factors often have a significant impact on women entrepreneurs. The study revealed that women struggle to balance work and family responsibility and as a rule follow a hands-on approach when it comes to running their businesses and felt a sense of guilt when it comes to family matters.

“I am the face of my school. Parents trust me with their children’s education... I was a teacher and after school sport duties caused me to neglect my own children... I started this school with the intention to be more flexible and not to neglect my children...But I take my administration home and struggle to find a balance between work and family time.” - P03, Vanderbijlpark, 06 Jul. 12:00.

“After the death of my husband, I realised I was a bad wife. I was not there for my husband and children. My business always came first, and my husband took over the family responsibilities” - P14, Vaalpark, 01 Sept.14:30.

The close proximity of a business to the entrepreneur’s residence also has an impact on time management. The findings supported the statement and women explained they feel that their business’s premises must be close to their house and their customers, and attempt to set an example for their staff members by being present on the business premises as much as possible. The researcher recognised that the women regard close proximity to their house as a strategy to manage their time and have control over their staff.

“I live in the building above my business; I need to be close to my business...If I’m not here things will not be done...I need to be hands-on” - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

“I set an example for my staff...I always feel guilty when I leave to do some personal errand... I haven’t been on a holiday for the last 5 years.” - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

3.3.3.4 Independence

Independence also emerged as a sub theme of motivation. Independence is normally one of the reasons why women are motivated to start their own businesses (Buthelezi, 2011:37). The study somewhat contradicted Buthelezi (2011) and revealed women participants were not overly driven by independence, but rather by the desire for self-fulfilment and accomplishment. Independence did present as a factor to influence some of the participants; however, was not a main emerging theme.

Independence sometimes presents itself in different forms which include women wanting to control her own destiny; not wanting to ask other people for money and in the case of Participant P09, not wanting to explain what she uses her money for. Participant P05 in contrast, has shown independence from being her own boss and controlling her own destiny.

“I do not need to work, however also do not want to ask my husband for money. I want to buy my children nice things, and do not want to ask my husband and explain what I needed the money for.” - P09, Vanderbijlpark, 09 Aug. 12:00.

“After I finished my diploma in hairdressing and obtained my required working hours, I wanted to become my own boss. I actually never intended to work for somebody else.” - P05, Vanderbijlpark, 18 Jul. 08:00.

Women entrepreneurs have the ability to identify good opportunities and act upon these opportunities, however the independence theme did not reflect in their decision-making.

Franchise opportunities also presented valuable opportunities for participant P04 and P12. Franchising often provides an entrepreneur with the opportunity to form part of a larger network structure, and are more focussed on the group effort rather than individual’s own entrepreneurial endeavours.

“I saw a franchise opportunity and acted upon it, my husband said he will support me financially for the first year. I quit my job in retail and my husband took out a loan to buy the business. The loan was against our mortgage bond.” - P04, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Jul. 12:00.

Participant P12 not only trades in the franchise food industry, she also develops, sell and rent residential properties. This woman participant also employed the most staff members, with the highest number of businesses.

“I bought one property above the restaurant, and started to rent it out. I realised there are huge demands for renting premises to sub-contractors. Therefore, I started to build more units. The sub-contractors can eat at my restaurant and stay on top of it.” - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 09 Aug. 12:00.

Participant P10 indicated that her husband’s income alone would not be sufficient to send her children to university.

“I wanted my children to go to university, I didn’t have any funds and my husband’s income alone was not enough. We had to make a plan. My brother asked me to join his company and I did. He made a suggestion that I start my own company in construction.” - P10, Vanderbijlpark, 10 Aug. 12:00.

Participant P03 indicated that the reason for starting a business is to have flexibility to take care of her children but she soon realised there is no flexibility in business.

“I was a teacher, and after school activities took all the time I should have spent with my children. I started the business for flexibility purposes, but once my business started growing, the flexibility aspect, why I started originally, disappeared.” - P03, Vanderbijlpark, 06 Jul. 12:00.

In general, the women entrepreneurs interviewed are educated but they often do not work in the field they studied in. The women also do not depend on employment in the formal sector. Some of the Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs are widowed and the deaths of their husbands motivated them to become business women. Table 3.1 provide general motivations for women entrepreneurs to starting their business.

Table 3.2: General motivational factors

I wanted to create something different and not have an office work
I went to university I never intended to work in the field.
I have a passion for business
I started a business due to the death of my husband
I started a business for social welfare

Source: Compiled by the researcher

3.3.3.5 Opportunity

The opportunity recognition as a sub theme of motivation emerged from the data. The Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs in general have family backgrounds of family owned businesses. Women participants, with participant P06 as exception, were not interested in joining the family businesses. Friends or family members often make suggestions on possible business opportunities and the women react thereon. Franchise opportunities also provided a platform in which some women entrepreneurs engaged in new business ventures by acquiring additional franchises to capitalise on brand names.

Participant P01 indicated that she wants to retire, however while driving to her farm, she continuously talked about opportunities in the market. *“I want to retire, but I see business opportunities in everything.... Look at the people that collect tins... I want to build a silo on that premises... My father has always advised me to take your product closer to the customer; I am always looking to do this...I always look at ways to reduce holding costs...I feel there is a lot of opportunity in agricultural farming. We need to look at safeguarding the environment. Earthworms, there is a lot of opportunity there. One needs to use natural compost. You can save the environment and build a business out of it. Look at the recycling of plastics. Look at the people in the street; they collect tins and plastic for money.”* - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

Entrepreneurs are infatuated by opportunity and typically market orientated. Material wealth does not drive the entrepreneur, however the obsession to find new and innovative ways to bring their product to the market. Participant P02 explained there are numerous opportunities in the Vaal Triangle.

“There is opportunity in everything, especially in the Vaal Triangle. Do your market research; look at the gap in the market. What do you want that’s not on the market? Create something that’s different; introduce the product or service you cannot find in the market.” - P02, Vaalpark, 03 Jul. 14:00

Participant P06 joined the family farming business and saw the opportunity to market their product by opening a biltong shop in a very busy shopping centre. *“I grew up on a farm and managed the family slaughterhouse; I decided to take some of the stock from my father’s farming operations and started to sell on small scale in a rented property in town. This created a formal distribution centre for the family business. People not only buy biltong from my shop, they order meat from the slaughter house.”* - P06, Vanderbijlpark, 20 Jul. 13:00.

Participant P04 went on holiday in Kwa-Zulu Natal and saw a franchise opportunity not explored in the Vaal Triangle. *“I went on holiday and saw a franchise that sells dried fruit, and realised that we do not have this franchise in the Vaal Triangle”*- P04, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Jul.12:00.

Participant P07 created an opportunity through taking an existing market and exploring different ways to satisfy the market. *“My husband has a truck transport business. I performed a feasibility study on what people are looking for in the truck industry. Covers for trucks were highly in demand but there were very few suppliers. The people thought I was the competition due to my husband’s own transport business, and they didn’t support me, I realised I needed to make covers for anything and everything, not just for the trucking industry.”* - P07, Vaalpark, 02 Aug. 08:00.

The women participants in the study highlighted the importance of creativity in identifying opportunities in the market. This supported the findings of Deborah *et al.* (2015:41) which revealed that women entrepreneurs use their creativity to alter and to improve their products and their approach to existing procedures, to assist in identifying solutions to problems, to recognise opportunities and to formulate new ideas.

Women entrepreneurs are strong and creative, they are initiators, who are goal-orientated and have the ability to succeed in trying circumstances. The women explained that times have changed and women are becoming significant role players in business.

“Women are very creative these days; unlike men. The majority of women do not have a choice but to find a concept and run with it, as a means to survival...women are strong...times have changed. Nowadays, women and men need to put their incomes together, and men are not the sole providers anymore.” - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

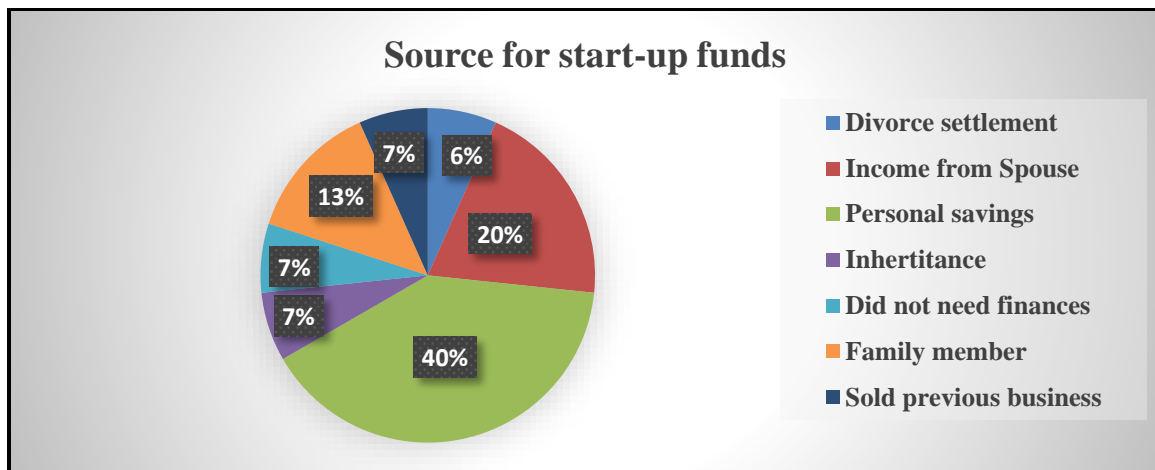
“I baked cakes for my children’s birthdays and family and friends started to ask me to bake for their children’s birthday parties. I started my bakery and it grew ever since. I recently started a printing business. I sometimes print pictures on the cakes, now people are asking me to print on different materials.” - P13, Vanderbijlpark, 24 Aug. 17:00.

3.3.2 Start-up funding

The start-up funding emerged as a theme and relates to the method women entrepreneurs used to obtain finance to start their businesses. Women entrepreneurs often use their own personal savings from previous employment, and often rely on family and friends for financial support to start their businesses. In some instances women participants revealed that their husbands took out loans against their mortgage, while other women used their inheritance from their husbands.

Money is not the key ingredient for an entrepreneur to achieve success, but rather the ability to source the right people; the formation of networks and effectively utilising all factors of production. Friends and family may also serve as a useful way to source finance. The study however revealed that the largest source of funds the women interviewed used to start their businesses, came from their own personal savings and represent 40% of the entire population of this study. The second largest source was income from spouses at 20%, and thirdly loans from family members at 13%. Participant P01 used her divorced settlement money to acquire farming land. Participants P03 and P04 indicated that their husbands took loans against their mortgage bonds. P11 indicated that she did not require start-up funding, as she provided a service to her customer and P12 used the proceeds from selling her previous business. Figure 3.7.1 shows a summary of the responses.

Figure 3.8 Source for start-up funds



Source: Researcher compiled

The results showed that the women interviewed relied more on income from spouses than friends and family members: 40% of the women used their own personal funding, 20% used income from spouses, and 13% from friends and family, while 7% generated money by selling of their business. A study performed by Meyer (2009:15) on Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs showed similar results and also indicated that women generally use their own personal savings to start their business.

3.3.3 Innovation

Innovation emerged as a significant theme. Zimmerer and Scarborough (2008:43) defined innovation as “the ability to apply creative solutions to problems and opportunities to enhance the lives of people.” Innovation can be found in the heart of any entrepreneur. The entrepreneur is innovative, driven, and willing to search for and recognise good opportunities and pursuing their goals with the expectation of creating wealth, however, not only for monetary reasons but also giving back to society. The Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs support the statement and feel that innovation is a success strategy to venture creation, business growth and sustainability.

“Don’t be like the dinosaurs, you’ll become extinct...Famers need to continuously do research in investing in the newest technologies... We had a 100-year drought last year. I always need to think innovatively. When market prices were too low to sell my grain I started

chicken farming and looked for opportunities to reduce holding costs. I want to build my own silo to store the grain and thereby reducing holding cost. One needs to have a diverse portfolio. When the market is down farmers have the tendency to become very innovative, produce something different. You have to pay your farm workers. You cannot sit and wait for a better market price.” - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

The entrepreneur is intuitive and innovative and engages in entrepreneurial activities without being over analytical. The findings somewhat contradicted the statement that entrepreneurs perform the entrepreneurial function without being over-analytical, as women often engaged in extensive market research and scenario planning activities. The study revealed that women entrepreneurs obtain business growth through innovation and recommend that other women entrepreneurs introduce different products and services, to engage in continued innovation and as a result, ensure they have good value propositions and competitive advantages in their business.

“Find innovative ways to deliver a special service to the customer. Determine what you need and investigate the demand where there is no market supply.” - P02, Vaalpark, 03 Jul. 14:00

“I started with truck covers and diversified my business. I started to make covers for different industries. My covers for shot guns are the best in the world; this was confirmed by hunters overseas.” - P07, Vaalpark, 02 Aug. 08:00.

“Find innovative ways to provide a service... what do mummies need to relax? Add additional innovative services to your product. We sometimes go to mummies that can't eat their food because they need to look after their children, we take the children and play with them in the mother's sight, this gives her a chance to relax while she knows she can unwind and still see her children.” - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

Women entrepreneurs stressed that lack of innovation would lead to businesses failure. The women further suggested that you need to find adaptive and innovative ways to distinguish your product from the other products in the market.

“It is the smallest things that can have a big impact on your business...I continuously talk to the vendors... they always find innovative ideas, based on old concepts, with a little bit of an

adjustment.... One vendor made R75, 000 by selling old imported clothes in the cottage market...hear what people want, listen to your customer and look at the lack in the market.” - P02, Vaalpark, 03 Jul. 14:00

The demand in the market is the key to measure an innovative idea and provides the key to distinguish between an idea and opportunity. The market demand and structure will also guide the entrepreneur to define and measure the opportunity. The Vaal Triangle women participants supported the statement and revealed that one not only required an innovative idea but also a market to sell your idea to. Feedback from feasibility studies may also provide a useful tool to support your market research. Women tend to be market-orientated and place specific emphasis on market research. In contradiction to the Schumpeter’s theory that entrepreneurs are able to perform activities without being over analytical, women entrepreneurs are generally very analytical and frequently rely on feasibility studies to support the entrepreneurial function. Women also recommend the use of feasibility studies when introducing new products or services to the market, and to obtain feedback from existing customers.

“Be innovative and consider positive and negative feedback. Feedback on an idea, by means of a feasibility study will assist...it does not help you are innovative but there is no market to support the idea. You also need to balance negative and positive feedback; there are a lot of sceptics out there who will discourage your innovativeness.” - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

The women participants generally refer to the internet as an innovative platform to do research and market their businesses. Women also use innovative means to get ideas from the public through this medium. *“I try to find innovative ways to market my guest house. With the internet as platform, one cannot afford not to utilise technologies. Last year I had a team of students who marketed my business through online advertisements and performed a customer survey feedback with enormous success.” - P02, Vaalpark, 03 Jul. 14:00*

Data indicated that women entrepreneurs often rely on customers’ feedback to test new ideas, or improve current products and service delivery. *“I always ask my customers for new ideas for the playpark. A child gets bored easily and you need activities that keep them busy. I*

originally targeted the market for children, but soon realised one can provide entertainment for the parents as well.” - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

The women interviewed regard constant research as a contributing factor to the success of their businesses. Women in education often rely on research to distinguish themselves from their competitors; they highlight the importance of new themes, and find innovative methods to transfer the new information to their clients. *“The art culture requires me to think innovatively. I sometimes sit for months at a time to plan new themes and songs for the students, which the parents and the students will enjoy. I need to distinguish myself from other art schools.”* - P09, Vanderbijlpark, 09 Aug. 12:00.

3.3.4 Education

The theme of education relates to the women’s formal and informal education before engaging in business activities. Herrington *et al.* (2016:32) highlighted that education of individuals, with skills and the ability to innovate, will positively impact “self-efficacy” and “self-confidence”. They further explained that the possibility of such individuals to start up successful businesses and to navigate through ever-changing business environments, have a higher success rate.

3.3.4.1 Formal education

The subtheme of formal education relates to prior education at a recognised institution. Most of the women in the study are educated, with qualifications including accounting and business administration fields. This is contradicting to the findings of Mandipaka (2014:1188), who stated that one of the barriers to business success is the low level of education among these women. A study conducted by Meyer and Landsberg (2015:3860), in contrast, also revealed that more than half of the respondents were educated and either have a diploma or degree. This is similar to the findings of this study.

Entrepreneurs do not necessarily trade in the field they are educated in, but rather explore new markets, searching for good opportunities and finding innovative ways to introduce new products and services within the market. They do not necessarily require a formal education to ensure business success, nevertheless, may benefit from it. The findings from the

interviews support the statement and revealed women entrepreneurs often do not trade in the field they were educated in but their qualification however assisted them in running their businesses.

“My degree in law assisted me in negotiating a favourable deal to purchase property. When comparing myself to other women in the arts and crafts industry, I realise I do have the added benefit.” - P09, Vanderbijlpark, 09 Aug. 12:00.

“I am a chartered accountant who worked during the day and studied at night. My husband was in business...I learned a lot from him... The field that I studied in helped me quite a lot on how to run a business and market myself.” - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

Some women entrepreneurs used their education as their main business activity, while the majority of women entrepreneurs revealed that they were not interested in formal employment relating to their field of qualification.

“I studied to become a teacher. My business relates to educating students after school, it is my business and I have a passion for education” - P03, Vanderbijlpark, 06 Jul. 12:00.

“I obtained my degree in accounting but never intended to work in an office. I worked in the family business; I do feel that my degree assists me in running my business.” - P06, Vanderbijlpark, 20 Jul. 13:00.

Some of the women have not received tertiary education, and never intended to further their studies. Their motivation for starting their businesses was due to the passion for their product, business and people. These women are highly energetic, believe in hard work and believe that having the right attitude will contribute to business success.

“I never went to study. I feel you need experience with the right attitude more. The right attitude means starting to work your way up. I was always interested in marketing and started as a beauty consultant. I started to market beauty products, and was nominated for the best sales representative and that without an educational background.” - P07, Vaalpark, 02 Aug. 08:00.

Participant P11 acquired further qualifications in financial broking. She intended to take over her husband's financial broking firm after he died. She successfully completed the certificate and worked the required learning hours, thereafter pursued the business in broking. *"After my husband's death I took over the business, with only a secretarial diploma. The business relates to financial broking and I needed to right my exams in broking. It was hard work but I survived"* - P11, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug.08:00.

Participant P12 gave up her studies, for which she had a full bursary, but her passion was for business and the studies would have been a waste of her time when she intended to do business all along. *"I received numerous bursaries to study in the field of computer science. As a student, I worked during the holidays, and started to work for an American company. It was there that I realised studying computers is not for me, I wanted to learn from the Americans on how to do business...I send students overseas, to learn from other companies.... I have not regretted my decision for one minute."* - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

3.3.4.2 Informal education

The subtheme of informal education relates to programs, online tutoring, books and market survey research. Entrepreneurs often rely on informal education to enhance their entrepreneurial skill. The study provided strong evidence that the majority of participants engaged in informal educational activities, and attended conferences on activities that relates to entrepreneurial endeavours, even when they did not have formal training in this field.

The study indicates that women would like to attend programs, which can help to develop their entrepreneurial skills. Two of the women revealed that they attended a short course at the NWU, which relates to entrepreneurial learning. Women entrepreneurs are highly intelligent, curious individuals who actively seek opportunities to grow. *"I would like to attend a program on entrepreneurship. One is never too old to learn."* - P07, Vaalpark, 02 Aug. 08:00. The women participants indicated the need to attend such programs but could not provide the name of an institution that offers these opportunities.

Participant P02 also indicated that she would want to send her workers on such a program, however feel the cost is very high with little results. *"I sent one of my employees on a*

program at a (well-known) university. It cost me a fortune and I didn't reap any benefits from it." - P02, Vaalpark, 03 Jul. 14:00.

Women entrepreneurs read a lot and continuously do research activities relating to the industry they work in. *"You need to continuously do research. Read books and do online tutorials. There are numerous online educational programs."* - P07, Vaalpark, 02 Aug. 08:00.

Having the proper knowledge and investment in continued market research, are an integral part for business owners. The entrepreneur and business owners need to know their customer, the new market trends and demands and their competition. There are different ways to perform market research customer surveys, tutorials from the internet or simply just by visiting different businesses and enquiring about the need in the market. This was true for many of the women participants, where they actually visited different businesses to determine market demand. Feasibility studies also assisted the marketing function.

An entrepreneur does not necessarily need an education to start a business, however requires educational tools to assist with the generation of ideas, identifying opportunities, and enhance networking skills and overall running a business effectively. The study found strong evidence that supported the statement. Women entrepreneurs placed high emphasis on informal education and explained an entrepreneur can get valuable information from books and the internet on how to manage your businesses, and also referred to *YouTube* as an effective online educational tool.

3.3.5 Commitment

One of the important emerging themes was commitment. Commitment relates to a sense of responsibility these women have towards their stakeholders. The attributes of successful entrepreneurs are commitment and normally goes along with enormous sacrifice. The study revealed women entrepreneurs are extremely committed and often neglect family and household responsibilities. This specifically was the case for participant P14.

"After my husband's death, I realised I was a bad wife and mother to my children. My business always came first. My husband performed the role of the mother and care giver." - P14, Vaalpark, 01 Sept.14:30.

A study conducted by Bridget Irene (2016:75) on women in small business, revealed that women are extremely committed, mostly on staying focused when business is failing and thereafter to business strategy, however, they are less committed to their customer, other stakeholders and to hard work.

This is inconsistent with the findings emerging from this study. The women participants interviewed were all highly committed to their stakeholders, their customers, their products and to hard work. Participant P01 indicated that once you commit to make a payment to your supplier, you need to keep to your promise. *“I feel very strong about committing to pay my suppliers. If you are not able to pay your supplier, you need to make arrangements. Go on your knees and ask for extension and forgiveness”* - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

The commitment to quality service delivery is crucial for businesses sustainability. If you promise your customers a certain product at a given time and quality, you need to ensure you give it to them. This was true for many women entrepreneurs and in addition women regard commitment to staff members as very important. The women explained that staff members are reliant on them to pay their salaries. The women similarly emphasised the commitment to your business through hard work, hard work in the sense that you work on your business and not in your business.

“I believe you need to commit to your product, if you promise your customer a certain product, you must deliver that product. You need to build trust with your customer and your product” - P04, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Jul.12:00.

“I strongly believe in committing to the time. If you made a promise to deliver your product at a certain time, you need to stick to it and deliver on your promise. You need to build your customer’s trust.” - P10, Vanderbijlpark, 10 Aug. 12:00.

“You need to commit yourself to hard work. Business is hard work. Young people think they can go into a business and they fail within the first year. You need to do your research and work hard to grow and sustain your business.” - P05, Vanderbijlpark, 18 Jul. 08:00.

“You need to work hard and commit to your business. I always say you need to work hard on your business, not in your business, there is a difference!” - P07, Vaalpark, 02 Aug. 08:00.

3.3.6 Religion

Religion was a significant emerging theme from the study. All women participants in the study referred to religion as a form of business strategy. The researcher found limited studies on religion and women entrepreneurship. The women explained that just when they think they are not going to be able to pay salaries that month, something comes their way and they know it comes from God. This is consistent with literature; scholars such as Adam Smith and Max Weber recognised the influential role religion have on economics (Audretsch *et al.*, 2007:2).

Women entrepreneurs all reflected on where they are coming from, and how God supported them on their journey. The women often revealed that they would not be able to have businesses if it was not for God Who assisted them and they show their gratitude through constant prayer. *“My only hope is in God. My business survives on a lot of prayers”*- P05, Vanderbijlpark, 18 Jul. 08:00.

Women entrepreneurs trading in the agricultural and hospitality industry revealed their absolute reliance on God; specifically women in agricultural farming business are reliant on the environmental factors, which only God can control. *“Nood leer bid.” (When you are in need, you learn how to pray)* - P01, P07, P08, P11 and P12.

The women responded that the downturn in the economy had an immediate effect on their business as most of the businesses relate to luxury products. They indicated that God was and is their only hope. Women often rely on God for planning and sustainability purpose. *“My trust is in God. I pick 40 lavender twigs to put on the plates, and hope that each lavender finds a plate. God always provides”* - P02, Vaalpark, 03 Jul. 14:00.

Women entrepreneurs also indicated that they want God to live through their staff members. *“I can only survive through God. I live for God in my business; I want my employees to reflect Jesus.”* – P04, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Jul. 12:00.

Participants P08 and P11 suffered losses from the death of their husbands and created new businesses with God as their support system.

“After the death of my husband, I couldn’t work for a year, I felt sorry for myself. My granddaughter told me that it would be a good idea to open up a playpark. I started thinking and went to my pastor....God has provided. I opened up the play park and now have a restaurant and play park where mothers and fathers can bring their children to relax.” - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

“After my husband died, my family was devastated. He had a broker firm and I usually helped him with administration. After his death, I took over the business and needed to write exams. The broker industry needs their client’s trust. God continuously sent people on my way who gave referrals and these referrals resulted in more referrals. God is part of my everyday life” - P11, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 08:00.

3.3.7 Business challenges

Business challenges relate to the difficulties women face in their current business operations. Different themes emerged: environmental, economic, problems with human resources, time management and marketing related.

A study conducted by KPMG revealed from a survey of 204 founders of women businesses and leaders from 5000 companies, top challenges pertained to “hiring the right people, time management, managing cash flow through lean times, funding growth and developing sales forecast and hitting those targets” (KMGP, 2015:3), this was true for many of the women participants and posed as a significant barrier to business growth.

The study supports Dr Louise Van Scheers’ (2010:5051) view that barriers to business success for both males and females relate to: “managing personal stress, managing time, performance appraisal, motivating employees, managing conflict, solving problems, marketing, bookkeeping, record keeping, writing business plans and pricing”

The theme “economic and environmental” factors featured in many of the interviews. The other prominent themes that emerged from the interviews relate to human resource and time management and will be discussed in the following sections.

3.3.7.1 Environmental factors

The study revealed that environmental factors have a significant impact on business operations. The drought in farming operations in 2016, created significant problems for the farmers, and market supply did not meet market demand. High storage cost and under supply of grain had serious financial implications for the women farmers. *“Last year we had a severe drought. People underestimate holding costs. That is why I want to buy the land to build silos on. I can rent it out to other agricultural farmers”* - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

Women participants explained that in wintertime, they have a problem with business, as entertainment facilities that are outside are underutilised; this also applies to rainy days, when the entertainment area will be closed. Participant P08 responded that she opened up an inside entertainment area to minimise losses, however still struggle to recover financial loss during winter periods.

“...It is quiet in winter time. In summer time, parents love to come and spend time with their children in good weather conditions...” - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug.16:30.

“...Some vendors phone me a week before the cottage market and ask whether it’s going to rain. This upsets me, why do they have so little trust. I pay a deposit for the tents and rely on the vendors to pitch up” - P02, Vaalpark, 03 Jul.14:00.

3.3.7.2 Economic factors

Most of the women trades in luxury products and or services and due to this, explained that the downturn in the economy immediately affects their sales income.

One of the woman in the hospitality industry explained that government institutions do not let officials stay over in five or four star guesthouses due to governmental budget cuts. This necessitated the woman to down grade to a level three, to meet the level requirement.

Similarly, with companies cutting costs, companies do not normally let their employees stay over as they did previously and the women in the hospitality industry experienced the effect immediately.

“I pray every day that I’ll have enough money to pay my staff. Companies are cutting costs, and it resulted in fewer monthly conferences and less business meetings. Where vendors previously stayed in guesthouses, they now stay with friends and family. With God’s grace we are able to pay them every time.” - P02, Vaalpark, 03 Jul. 14:00.

A woman in hairdressing said that she experienced a loss in sales due to retrenchments of husbands working in large industrial companies. She explained that where a woman would cut and treat her hair regularly; she will now only want a haircut and buy a box of hair colour and perform the service herself.

Women operating in the franchise food industry had to cut down on staff and this rippled right through to local suppliers closing their doors.

“... We had the lowest turnover in May since inception of the business. I spoke to various business owners and they experienced the same. One of my suppliers indicated that she had to cut down on 75% of staff, and the 25% of staff remaining work on provision” - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

Surprisingly, one woman in the building industry could not keep up with demand and indicated that she does not want to grow her business further due to time constraint and the stress related to the industry. *“I cannot keep up with the demand. I manufacture and install the aluminium doors and windows and cannot be everywhere”* - P10, Vanderbijlpark, 10 Aug. 12:00.

Participant P08 revealed she calculated that the food prices increased by 9%, and she had to increase her menu prices twice during the year. *“I had to increase my menu prices twice this year. I provide large portions of food at low costs, customers do not realise how expensive food is”* - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

Women entrepreneurs try to cut operational cost and often rely on their husbands for maintenance duties. *“I try to save where possible. My husband helps me out with the maintenance duties.”* –P03, Vanderbijlpark, 6 Jul. 12:00. Participant P02’s husband is retired and she relies on her husband to perform certain business duties. *“My husband helps around*

the business; I cannot afford to appoint new staff. My husband makes the breakfast for the guest house.” - P02, Vaalpark, 03 Jul. 14:00.

In certain instances women indicated that they are sometimes worried that they will not be able to pay their staff.

The study showed that property rental, increase in food prices and theft contribute to lower profit margins. Women revealed that everything increased including salaries and wages of their staff. The women rely on sound cash flow management strategies and require to manage their cash flow through extensive planning and to save for the uncertain times. The study supports Garg and Duvenhage’s (2014:453) view that women are more prone to “risk-aversion” than men are and is consistent with some of the findings of the research study. Women are often afraid to take financial risk during the uncertainty in the economy.

“I only buy supplies with the money I make this week. I do not buy extra supplies. It is how I manage my cash flow. If there are no sales, I will not purchase any supplies. I do not keep inventory.” - P06, Vanderbijlpark, 20 Jul. 13:00.

“Inflation and interest are high. The cost of money is high. I manage my cash flow in such a way that I do not incur debt.” - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

The women in franchise retail industry revealed that products are now being sold in large retail stores at lower prices, and customers will rather visit these retail stores, than to support their outlets and pay a little extra for quality service delivery. They should also consider her high and increased operational cost. *“Nowadays, people are not willing to pay extra for quality dried fruit. They visit large retail stores where it is much cheaper. I provide a quality service delivery with my product. I cannot compete with price but need to manage to pay my operational expenses. I started to sell larger volumes of dried fruit to entrepreneurs, without the quality packaging. You will be surprised to see how many young male entrepreneurs buy from me.” - P04, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Jul. 12:00.*

3.3.7.3 Human resources

The study revealed that there is a shortage in skilled people. Women indicated that many of their staff cannot read or write and they had to provide extra classes to improve their skills. *“Some of my staff cannot read and write. I want to empower my staff and their families. I started a program to help their children. I rewrite their books in Sesotho.”* - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

Women also pointed out that the newer generation do not want to work and do not want to start from the bottom. The women in the food and entertainment industry specifically, indicated that certain cultures’ students are not willing to complete training programs before starting to work.

The women working in the construction industry revealed that cultural differences sometimes cause a struggle. Women stated that in certain cultures, males do not listen to females. This poses a significant problem for the women in construction and they often resort to outsourced labour relations companies to have legal representation for disciplinary hearings and compliance to code of conduct. *“... It is difficult in the construction business. Cultural and gender differences makes it hard for a woman to operate in this industry. Men struggle to listen to a woman in this industry. I make use of outside consultants to assist me in this regard. I realised I had to make an example of staff not respecting me.”* - P10, Vanderbijlpark, 10 Aug. 12:00.

One woman also noted that males are mostly better waiters than their female counterparts are because men are generally better sales people. Many women said there was a lack in staff accountability for company property.

Women in retail revealed that they often have problems with stock theft and cannot determine whether it is the customers or their own workers. Women tend to be very self-critical and are critical of their staff. This may be due to inclination of perfectionism in these women.

These women feel that you need to set an example for your staff, and not show emotions in front of them. Women in general struggle with staff related matters.

"I found that my employees sometimes mark the selling prices of products incorrectly, causing immense financial losses." - P04, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Jul. 12:00.

"My employees are continuously looking for credit to perform their duties. The other day one of my staff said she cleaned the windows, and I felt, well I pay her a monthly salary to do so."
– P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

"I cannot rely on my staff to run my business. I continuously need to check up on them, and sometimes need to do their work" - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug.16:30.

"I want to grow my business and need skilled hairdressers. I have difficulty finding hairdressers that are both qualified and skilled to cut hair. Most of the women have the qualification however do not have the ability to cut hair properly." - P05, Vanderbijlpark, 18 Jul. 08:00.

"I cannot rely on my staff to visit clients. I'm the face of the business and will lose clients if I sent my staff to a client's business." - P10, Vanderbijlpark, 10 Aug. 12:00.

"I have hands on approach; I cannot rely on my staff. I need to continuously provide incentives and give them a pat on the back." - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

"I have a problem with employee loyalty. Employees are not loyal or committed. I need a loyal employee who will help my son to run the business someday. Remember your employees do not worry about your bank account." - P07, Vaalpark, 02 Aug. 08:00.

3.3.7.4 Time constraints

Time constraints as a subtheme of business challenges emerged from the data and are cohesive to the flexibility theme. All the participants indicated that time is a major constraint. Women, who were previously employed, explained the reason for leaving their formal jobs was to have more time on their hands to take care of domestic duties, however, the women now have very little time for themselves and sometimes need to perform the business administration at home. It was also evident during the interview process, when interviews were scheduled for a specific day and the women had to move the interview. Participant P12

revealed that her home is in close proximity to her restaurants, and that when things go wrong, she can be there immediately.

The women indicated that the men could take over domestic duties, such as preparing the food, taking and collecting the children from school and attending sport activities. Women in general follow a hands-on approach and like to do things themselves, rather than delegating. If she performs the duties herself, she knows it will be perfect. Most of the women interviewed regarded themselves as perfectionists who struggled to give the control to their staff members. Women entrepreneurs regard themselves as the face of the business, there are specific things they need to do themselves, and they do not trust their staff members to perform these duties.

The women all indicated that they really struggle to balance work and family life. Some duties, like business administration, specifically income, employee tax and payment of salaries, takes up a lot of time and women do not wish employees to perform these functions and will rather do it themselves.

3.3.7.5 Marketing

Many of the women interviewed referred to marketing as a barrier to entrepreneurial endeavours. They often use family members to assist with the marketing. Women revealed that they are out of touch with technology and rely on word of mouth from friends, family and customers. Women regard word of mouth as an effective marketing tool, however also recognise that this marketing method pose the most significant business risks. The woman, specialising in education, explained that, should one parent be unhappy and take their kids out of school, and spread the word, it could have a ripple effect resulting in loss of business.

Participant P04 started her business with a 5-year franchise agreement. She indicated that it is the franchisor's responsibility to market the product, but this has not happened yet. *"The franchisor will deliver a new product into the Vaal Triangle market without it being tested and marketed in this region"* - P04, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Jul. 12:00.

Participant P12 revealed that a boycott from customers due to bad franchise publicity caused her and her suppliers enormous damage. The participant explained that it is important for

entrepreneurs to have a diverse business portfolio. *“The boycott caused several suppliers to close their doors. I moved some of my staff to other franchises and will not make any new appointments.”* - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

Women regard marketing as significant to sustain and grow their business, and sometimes advertise through printed pamphlets. The women explained that business obtained from the pamphlet is minimum. Participant P09 regards a 4% response rate as sub-minimum and has not experienced any growth from this method of advertising. *“I sent pamphlets to the schools, to insert in newsletters sent mail to the parents. I did not receive any comebacks from this marketing strategy. My best decision was to move my business from the school to my own business premises. It served as a good marketing tool. Also mommies from upcoming neighbourhoods support my business now.”* - P09, Vanderbijlpark, 09 Aug. 12:00.

In contrast to other women participants, participant P11 used the local booklet printed every month, and felt it worked. *“I advertise in the local booklet. I get a lot of business from this method of advertising”*- P11, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 08:00.

Participant P02 used an airport agency to market her logging, but felt it is costly and she received little response.

The women recommend a good a networking system where males and females market their products and services through continued referral. There were mixed responses regarding formal networking associations, some approved it while others felt that it is expensive and they do not have the time to attend these meetings.

“I use the BNI network. We have monthly meetings and I receive many referrals. This network works.” - P06, Vanderbijlpark, 20 Jul. 13:00.

“The BNI network is too expensive and I never received any business from them. I also don’t have the time to sit in their meetings.” - P11, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 08:00.

3.3.7.6 Personal factors

Guilt, the critical factor (on themselves and on staff), perfectionism and the high sense of responsibility towards staff emerged as barriers to business growth. Women revealed that they felt guilty towards their husbands and children. *“After my husband’s death, I realised I was a bad wife and mother to my children. My business always came first. My husband performed the role of the mother and care giver.”* - P14, Vaalpark, 01 Sept. 14:30.

The findings of study are in contrast to findings by Meyer and Landsberg (2015:3858) who stated that a barrier to women entrepreneurs is the lack of self-confidence, in comparison to men, even when they are equal with males with regard to business practice, and despite their level of education and work status. The women entrepreneurs interviewed are all highly confident individuals, who regard males as equals to themselves. They do however struggle with guilt due to time spend away from their families, high sense of responsibility to their stakeholders and the struggle of being overcritical toward themselves and staff.

“I educate other parents children; however feel guilty about my own children. I often come home from work and tiredness prevails. I constantly feeling guilty as my children need more time with me. My business has grown to a point where the original reason why I started the business -to spend more time with my children-, disappeared.” - P03, Vanderbijlpark.6 Jul. 12:00.

These findings are consistent with a study performed by Garg and Duvenhage (2014:453), which revealed a diversity of economic, social and psychological factors that motivate individuals toward self-employment. The study also highlighted women entrepreneurs’ fear of failure as a contributing factor to barriers of women entrepreneurship.

3.3.8 Planning and research

Planning and research was a significant theme emerging from the study. Women entrepreneurs place emphasis on continued planning and research and recommend other women entrepreneurs engage and improve their planning and research skills. Planning and research in a business are essential. It helps the entrepreneur to seek and identify opportunities in the existing market or introduce a new product in the market. Planning also assists the

entrepreneur to identify the required resources to pursue or exploit an opportunity. Good planning and research are vital to any business decision, especially in the time of economic uncertainty. It became clear that women entrepreneurs regard planning and research as a success strategy for any women entrepreneur, whether it is for new venture start-ups, planning for uncertain times, for long or short time financial objectives or whether introducing a new product in the market.

“...You need to plan and do your research constantly. Money is expensive and one cannot afford to do business without proper planning and research.” - P09, Vanderbijlpark, 09 Aug. 12:00.

“...You need to do research; I always ask the questions whether there is a market for a product and whether I will use the product myself. You need to test your market through extensive research.” - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

Participant P04 who have the dried fruit franchise business said, if she only knew beforehand of the lack of support from the franchise to market the product, she would never have taken the franchising opportunity. She advised women to get a professional consultant with actual reliable figures before buying an existing business. *“If I did my research on this franchise with actual figures supporting the decision, I would not have taken this opportunity. Before you buy any business, do your research with actual figures supporting the decision”* - P04, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Jul.12:00.

Many of the women in business relied on financial advisory teams to provide professional guidance to plan their short-term and long-term portfolios. *“... I have an incredible financial advisor who sits with me every year and we plan the financial year. I would recommend for women to use professional help in planning their finances.”* - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

The women use scenario-planning techniques and advise other entrepreneurs to have a portfolio of investments, should one business fail, and you will have another to mitigate the risks of insolvency. *“I always say to plan not only in the short term, but in the long term. Have a diverse portfolio to ensure liquidity and plan for your future.”* - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

Women advised that, before you commit to any business proposition, you require good research with financial figures, to support the decision. In addition, they recommend performing market surveys before starting a business and recommend you perform a survey at least once a year. Some women felt that you require to plan six months in advance, and recommended other women perform sufficient research through customer surveys. *“I plan six months in advance. I perform customers surveys and rely on their feedback for planning purposes.”* - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

Women regard customer surveys as a significant strategy to business growth and recommend others have regular surveys to obtain positive and negative feedback from their customers. Some women said they close during December holidays, and need to plan and save to pay all expenses. *“I need to plan my cash flow for December. Its school holidays and parents do not pay after care fees. In my contract, it stipulates that the parents need to pay during December, but they take their children out of the school to avoid the fees. Comes January, the parents bring their children back again. This has an immense effect on my cash flow because I still need to pay my overheads during this period.”* - P03, Vanderbijlpark, 06 Jul. 12:00.

Participant P02 said she would pick 40 lavender stems a day, with the hope that each stem finds a plate. She does not have a formal, structured business and financial plan and explained it is *“all in her head”*.

“Money is expensive. Always have a financial leverage. Debt can cause business failure. Plan to have one asset for every liability.” - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

Many of the women referred to the internet as a platform to do research. This finding supports the research of Stander (2015:56) who indicated that most of the women participants relied on Facebook as their method to advertise.

“You really need to empower yourself through research. I constantly read books on running a business. There are numerous electronic tutorials available online that assist in running a business.” - P07, Vaalpark, 02 Aug. 08:00.

“I use the internet to develop new ideas for my ballet studio. I plan months ahead and need to do my research. I’m dependant on the internet to see all the current trends and themes.” – P09, Vanderbijlpark, 09 Aug. 12:00.

Participant 10 responded quite negatively towards planning. The participant indicated that she does not have a fixed business plan because of the variable of constant change. She also explained that with the current economic environment everything changes, also the approach she takes to her business and the plans that she makes. *“I do not have a fixed plan. My plans consistently change because the changes in economy have significant influences on my business decisions”* - P10, Vanderbijlpark, 10 Aug.12:00.

3.3.9 Customers

A significant emerging theme in the study was the women entrepreneur’s focus on her customers. A customer is the result of a successful business transaction, no matter how great the entrepreneur’s idea, a business exists because of its customers. Every entrepreneur knows the importance of good customer relations and knows that they need to build trust within their clients. Entrepreneurs have the ability to recognise their value proposition and often engage their clients in developing products or services. This became evident from interviewing 15 Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs. The women participants regard their customer’s needs as the highest priority and emphasise the importance of knowing your customer. They recognise that the quality of service delivery was the most significant success factor to business growth and sustainability. The women also highlighted the significance of having the right technological infrastructure. *“You need a good infrastructure to communicate your product to you customer.”* - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

Women entrepreneurs believed that the customers are the best way to market the business and regard the customer’s word of mouth as a significant factor for growth and sustainability, however realise the negative aspect one unhappy customer can have on a business.

Participant P08 indicated that she performs customer surveys with the purpose to firstly obtain positive and negative feedback from her clients, and to obtain suggestions from her customers. *“I always ask my customers what they want and whether they are happy with the service I provide.”* - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

Many women emphasised that you need to work hard to gain the trust of your customer. The women in the education industry especially felt that the parents need to trust you with their children. They recommend good customer communication and relationships, and felt that women in comparison to men, are better in customer communication. *“I think women are better in business than men. Women look after their customers better. They always talk to their customers and inquire whether the customer is satisfied. But I do know business men who also do that.”* - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

Women entrepreneurs have enhanced customer relations and tend to be better communicators than their male counter parts. Women continuously ask whether the clients are satisfied. Women in the vending and hospitality industry revealed the uncertainty factor in customers cause a great deal of frustration. *“Women entrepreneurs are non-believers, they always have doubt. They will phone a week before the cottage market to inquire whether the weather will play along. This is after I paid for the rental of vending tents, this frustrates me”* - P02, Vaalpark, 03 Jul.14:00.

Women entrepreneurs highlight that the customers need commitment from you, your product and your business. They refer to difficult customers who have high buying power but an unrealistic value for money. *“The clients are difficult, they do not know how much everything cost. They want the best flowers, however, are not willing to pay for it.”* - P15, Vereeniging, 08 Sept. 08:00.

Women revealed that they have loyal customers and provide an extra effort with them. *“I have clients that have been with me since the beginning. I treat them like royals.”* - P05, Vanderbijlpark, 18 Jul. 08:00.

The women mentioned that customers are price sensitive and one need sound communication skills to convince them of the high quality of the product and service in comparison to other competitors.

“I have a problem with large retail stores selling similar products cheaper. The customers are not willing to pay a little bit more for my product, even though it is of much better quality.” - P04, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Jul. 12:00.

“Tannie Stienie always asks cheaper prices. Women will complain about the cost of a haircut and colour. I always inform them of the quality of product I use.” - P05, Vanderbijlpark, 18 Jul. 08:00.

The findings support the recommendations by Van Scheers, (2011:5056), relating to strategies women entrepreneurs employ when determining the focus of the customer, the importance of customer needs, price and value proposition.

3.3.10 Financial strategies

Entrepreneurs regard finances as mutually *the most* or the *least* important aspect in the entrepreneurial process. It soon became clear that women entrepreneurs did not want to talk about financial strategies and steered the interview topic to their product and service offering. The women did not have structured financial strategies and rely on outside financial consultants to assist with the planning and managing of their investment portfolios. Women entrepreneurs highlight the importance to re-invest profits in the business. The women responded in general rather than listing specific financial strategies. Women focussed on internal cash flow management; re-invest cash generated in the business and perform financial duties themselves.

“I do not withdraw money from my business. I re-invest all my profits within my business. I do not have a free cash flow. I perform the financial function myself and due to inventory theft and wrong product pricing, have to perform constant check-ups.” - P04, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Jul. 12:00.

It can be deduced that the women rely on their cash flow and prospered as a result sound cash flow management. Apart from engaging in successful ventures, women empower other women who engage in “non-traditional” careers. The findings are consistent with a study conducted by Verwey (2006:4) which highlighted that cash flow is a significant factor for women in small business sustainability.

The women recommend that you keep your overhead costs as low as possible. *“I try to keep my overheads low and perform business administration duties myself. I use outside consultants to perform and capture my accounting duties. I also use my husband for*

maintenance duties and the teachers are paid on commission” - P03, Vanderbijlpark, 06 Jul. 12:00.

The women recommend that other women negotiate favourable prices with suppliers. *“Women require negotiation skills; they need to negotiate prices with their suppliers. Remember, lower input cost gives higher profit margins.” - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.*

They recommend that entrepreneurs take their product as close as possible to customers, avoiding intermediary expenses and holding costs. Women entrepreneurs regard the value of money as significant, and explained that in today’s time, one cannot afford to spend money on business activities that were not properly researched, before engaging in new business start-ups.

Successful entrepreneurs are not gamblers; they often take calculated risks and find innovative ways to minimize risks by distributing or sharing risks with others. Women in the study revealed they relied on planning and online research to support their business decisions.

“One cannot afford to spend money on a new business without doing your homework properly. In today’s economic climate, one needs to be careful and make calculated decisions before engaging in a new business start-up” - P09, Vanderbijlpark, 09 Aug. 12:00.

Another form of sourcing finance is to sell off existing businesses. Participant P12 builds her business portfolio by selling off assets and requiring new businesses with higher income potential.

“I use the funds from selling one property to buy a new property, I always invest the profits and aim for capital growth” - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

Women entrepreneurs rely on financial leverage and recommend one has an asset for every liability. They believe in keeping their ratio of asset versus liability in check, with emphasis on cash flow management. Women had concerns regarding the interest rates and advise that one needs to be careful thereof and to not underestimate the cost of borrowing money.

“Money is expensive. Always have a financial leverage. Debt can cause business failure. Plan to have one asset for every liability.” - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

The women often need to do extensive planning for closing times during the December holidays. December hits them the hardest when many families go on holiday. Women in the construction industry explained that contractors close early in December and sound cash flow management strategies are important. Participants in education experienced the same predicament and place emphasis on good financial planning. Some women participants manage their cash flows on a week on week basis. They will only buy for the next week with the money they made the previous week, and often regard a financial strategy as control over inventory and cash flow.

Women entrepreneurs often use financial advisors to support their short term and long term financial strategies. They have diverse portfolio of investments to mitigate business and financial risks. Planning is an important business function. *“I use a good financial team to help me plan for short and long-term objectives. They also assist me to have a diverse portfolio to distribute financial and business risks” - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.*

Women entrepreneurs typically prefer performing the financial function themselves and do not trust their employees with the businesses finances. They often save on operational cost by employing family members for certain tasks to assist in the struggle with daily business administration.

Table 3.3 provides the significant financial strategies women entrepreneurs use to overcome barriers to business growth and sustainability.

Table 3.3: Significant financial strategies

1. Manage your cash flow
2. Re-invest your profits in your business
3. Do not rely on debt
4. Set sales targets, commit to hitting the targets
5. Remunerate your employees on commission

6. Keep overheads low
7. Negotiate prices with your supplier
8. Use deposits to cover your input costs
9. Take your product as close as possible to the market – thereby reducing intermediate production and storage cost
10. Ensure staff marks the selling price of your products correctly
11. Use financial advisors to plan for the short and long term
12. Have a portfolio of investments to distribute business and financial risks (don't have your eggs in one basket)
13. Do not rely on your staff to look after your finances
14. Outsource your accounting function
15. Keep your business administration up to date. Know where you are and where you are going
16. Commit to paying your suppliers
17. Have a financial leverage: have an asset for each liability

Source: Compiled by the researcher

The data showed that women use the same financial strategies they recommend.

3.3.11 Required resources

Entrepreneurs require capital, property, plant and equipment, labour, expertise, marketing and management skills, timely business information, time and energy to undertake an enterprise. The women entrepreneurs engaged in various business activities with different product and service offerings. Some women required property plant and equipment, others provide a service that did not require any tangible assets and some required good weather conditions. Entrepreneurs also require a good leadership style and with the ability to effectively utilise all factors of production including, capital, employees and operational processes.

Entrepreneurs normally do not regard access to finance as a significant barrier to business venture start-ups, but rather the ability and talent to source the finance. The findings of the study supported the statement and revealed women did not regard finance as a barrier for their entrepreneurial endeavours. This might be attributable to the fact that they used money saved from previous employment, relied on family and friends for interest bearing loans, performed

services that either do not require capital for new business start-up or used deposits to fund projects. Women often sell their existing business to obtain funds for a new, more profitable business. The major concern for the participants was skilled labour and a need for good marketing strategies. Women entrepreneurs often depend on efficient management and teams to support the business function. In some instances, women obtained business permits to acquire land to trade on. Women entrepreneurs often acquire outside consultants for financial planning and managing the unfavourable human resource matters, such as disciplinary hearings.

“I rely on my management team. I feel you are just as strong as your staff. They will be your pillars. One does not live on an island. You can never live on an island.” - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

“I have a good management team that support me through all my businesses. I have a manager for every business, and they see to everything.” - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

Women generally provide quality services and refer to customers as their required resources and regard word of mouth as marketing strategy to support growth within the business.

“I do not require tangible resources as my business pertains to my own service delivery. I rely on my customers’ referrals. I do have a woman who helps me with the administration. I believe if you have good staff they will be pillars in any business.” - P11, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 08:00.

Women entrepreneurs rely significantly on word of mouth to support the growth in their businesses. The customers’ referral and word of mouth is a required resource, and women use it as a business growth strategy.

The study showed that women entrepreneurs build trust in their customers and emphasise the importance of loyal customers to support the business, even in the face of a recession. The women furthermore, regard the trust and loyalty of their customers as a required resource.

Women entrepreneurs normally use their property's image to advertise their businesses and place emphasis on good surrounding businesses to attract customers to their business and as a result provide an inviting image of the businesses. The women use their business image as a required resource to advertise and market themselves, and preferred a close proximity of their business to their homes as an added benefit.

"The best marketing decision I made was to move my business to my own business premises."
- P09, Vanderbijlpark, 09 Aug. 12:00.

"I am lucky my business is close to a school. Most of my students come from this school." - P03, Vanderbijlpark, 06 Jul. 12:00.

A general response from the women is that they re-invest their profits into the business, and use this money to capitalise within their businesses. The women highlight that you need to save and continuously upgrade your business and equipment. The women regard sufficient savings and investment in equipment as a required resource.

In addition, women entrepreneurs try to save enough money to buy equipment with the future prospect of buying a business premises closer to their customers.

"I used to visit schools and rent the school hall to give my classes. Last year I moved my business to an actual business premises. I gained many customers now, and my business is growing. Mommies from other schools now also bring their children for ballet classes, and my business now has a face." - P09, Vanderbijlpark, 09 Aug. 12:00.

"I plan to buy a super tube this summer which will cost me around five hundred thousand rand. One underestimates the price of equipment for children's entertainment purpose. I am going to use my invested savings to buy the equipment." - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

Participant P07 also raised concerns regarding recruiting skilled personnel to assist her son in running the business, should she retire. *"I need a consultant to help my son when he takes over the business. The consultant needs to take the measurements and design the covers on*

the computer. I need a skilled, committed and loyal employee.” - P07, Vaalpark, 02 Aug. 08:00.

“I need my equipment to be of the latest technology. I imported these fifteen tractors from Brazil a few years back. They are still in good working condition. I need my staff members to take accountability for the equipment. See the damage to that tree; it shows that my equipment might be damaged. This piece of equipment cost me R6 million rand. Let’s take some photos that you can use in your project” - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

The researcher provides the following photos as an illustration of what Participant P01 regards as her required resources.

Photo 3.1: Land and livestock as a required resource



Source: Photo taken by participant P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

Photo 3.2: Property plant and equipment as a required resource



Source: Photo taken by Participant P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

Photo 3.3: Property plant and equipment as required resource



Source: Photo taken by Participant P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

Photo 3.4: Equipment as required resource



Source: Photo taken by Participant P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

Photo 3.5: Equipment as a required resource



Source: Photo taken by Participant P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

3.3.12 Change and adapt

The theme of change and adapt is a significant emerging theme which goes hand-in-hand with innovation. Entrepreneurs must sometime embrace change to respond to external market conditions. This was true for many of the Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs. The women interviewed often refer to constant change and continued improvement to grow and sustain their businesses.

“It is difficult to have a fixed plan, everything changes every day, and one needs to adapt your product and service for your customer and current market trends. Planning is a continuous process which involves change.” - P10, Vanderbijlpark, 10 Aug. 12:00.

The women, in general, indicated you need to keep to basics, however also require introducing new elements in terms of your products and services.

The women entrepreneurs continuously revisit their marketing approach due to changes in technological web advances. The study showed that women entrepreneurs use the internet as a significant platform to market their products and services. Women entrepreneurs place emphasis on the uniqueness of the product and service that they introduce to the market. The women explained that you require a certain attitude to drive constant change within your business. The women, in addition, guard against oversupplying the market and explain that the result may cause business failure. They further recommend continued assessment of your products and your services.

“You need to walk the extra mile and take your product to your customer, get their feedback, and change your product when necessary.” - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

The participants revealed that they perform surveys to obtain suggestions from the public. They will then evaluate their products and services and change, adapt or make improvements where they deem necessary.

In addition, women feel you need to obtain input from your customers and evaluate both positive and negative feedback from your clients. You then need to plan and change your product to meet market demands.

Women also referred to family members to make suggestions, and they obtained advice, with enormous success.

“As I mentioned earlier, do not be like a dinosaur, you’ll become extinct. One needs constant change. In today’s economic and environmental uncertainty one requires to change and improve your product and sometimes adding value to your product or service offering” - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

“Continuously see how you can change and improve yourself. You need to see what is required in the market. You have come this far, use your product and add something new to it, maybe provide an additional service.” - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

“I had a discussion with one of my friends. She makes her own hand creams and has a unique product. The problem with the hand cream is that people can buy hand creams at half the price at large retail outlets. There is an oversupply of the product on the market. You need to look at demand and supply. When there is too much price competition, you either need to find a niche market or change your product completely. With the Chinese in the South African market, entrepreneurs find it difficult to sell their unique product” - P04, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Jul. 12:00.

“I’m old, but always try to find innovative ways to market my business. I try to engage the younger people in identifying new and improved ways to market the guest house. The young waiters in my restaurant continuously make suggestions. Last year they helped me to redo my website and assisted in marketing on Facebook and Instagram.” - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

3.3.13 Growth and sustainability

The women generally indicated that they would like to grow their businesses but there are exceptions where women revealed that they do not want to expand. They are the faces of their businesses and do not want staff members to perform their duties.

“I do not want to grow my business. I am the face of my business. As I explained earlier, the builders and architects want me to be on site personally. I do not have the time to go to every

construction site. I can also not send staff members to stand in for me. I will lose customers.”
- P10, Vanderbijlpark, 10 Aug. 12:00.

Women often do not trust their employees to run their business, thereby placing more pressure on themselves. They tend to micro manage their businesses, which may affect their business's growth.

Global studies showed that there is a direct link between family responsibility and lower growth tendency in women owned businesses (SBP, 2013:9); and it is also evident in the findings of this empirical study.

“I do not want to grow my business. I started my business to be more flexible with my family responsibilities. The more my business grows, the less time I will have to spend with my children. It will defeat the purpose of starting the business in the first place.” - P03, Vanderbijlpark, 06 Jul. 12:00.

Women in general indicated that one need to have a portfolio of investments to mitigate business risk for sustainability and solvency reasons.

“I have a diverse business portfolio to mitigate my business risk. We had a boycott in the restaurant business; I had to rely on my other businesses to carry me through this period.” - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

Apart from family responsibility, domestic responsibilities also place a constraint on the women entrepreneurs' time and influence their business's growth. The women supported the statement and the researcher realised these women participants are very perfectionistic, typically followed a hands-on approach, and their need to control everything affects their business growth.

The word of mouth referrals from existing customers helps businesses to grow. The findings supported the statement and additionally indicated educational background assist in creating business growth and financial strategies. Women also felt that the surrounding businesses strongly influence their business growth. In addition, they also used their business premises as a form of marketing tool to ensure business growth.

The older women participants indicated that they want to retire one day and they want family members to take over the business. The women still wanted to grow their businesses, but focus on sustainability rather than business growth. Debt also poses a reason for concern for business sustainability reasons. Women entrepreneurs also do not want to leave their financial matters to employees, as this will cause business failure.

Depending on their types of business, some of the women indicated that the current economic environment have an enormous impact on their business's growth while others referred to environmental factors such as weather conditions impacting their growth. The general concern relating to growth is that the women do not trust their employees to run their businesses.

3.3.14 Networking

Networking creates a platform of information sharing and provides the entrepreneur access to market information, ideas and provide information for the identification of ideas. The findings of the study support the statement and relate to formal and informal networking. Women strongly believe in networking and they often identified formal networking organisations. The Business Network International (BNI) was mentioned quite regularly. Formal networking is often expensive and not very effective.

Participant P07, who have her own networking company in the Vaal Triangle, indicated that BNI worked for most of her clients.

“The BNI networks works for women, however in has its limitations. More specialised industries do not often benefit due to a highly regulated and specialised environment. One woman started selling cookies last year and received numerous referrals from the network and now cannot keep up with demand.” - P07, Vaalpark, 02 Aug. 08:00.

Participant P02 and P11 indicated that belonging to an organisation is costly and their businesses have not received any business from the networking. Word of mouth is a strong form of networking and women confirmed this statement. The study revealed that word of mouth is the strongest form of networking for these women. Participant P12 belongs to a rotary club where males and females can share information on their respective businesses.

Participant P13 will be illustrating how to bake a cake at the club the following weekend. Participant P02 referred to her cottage market, where vendors know each other and supported one another.

“The BNI is too costly, and I do not have the time to sit in meetings. I belonged to a formal network however received no referrals. I feel word of mouth is more effective. I also use my customers and my suppliers as my network” - P02, Vaalpark, 03 Jul.14:00.

“The rotary club provides entrepreneurs with lots of marketing opportunity and business owners can contribute to their communities. Most of the rotary club members are women and very successful business people” - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

3.3.15 Gender roles

Many women entrepreneurs are of the view that men are barriers to the woman entrepreneur's success. However, recently more and more women entrepreneurs regard men as their method of support when it comes to family and household responsibility. This was the case for the Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs. Findings show that men generally face the same business challenges as women and regard male business people and entrepreneurs as assets. They do however feel that women are better in business due to the way they speak and inquire from their customers. Women entrepreneurs have a softer touch than men have and more innovative and in touch with their customer's needs. The findings support the statement and revealed hardly any women indicated that men are barriers in their businesses success. In contrast to this finding, women in a more technical field revealed that men do not listen to women in the construction industry.

Husbands supported the women with family responsibility duties, and at times, the husband and wife will exchange their roles.

Participant P12 indicated that she would rather work with males than females, due to the direct method men employ when doing businesses. She also felt that men are better at selling.

“I found that male waiters are better than female waiters, they also earn better tips than females.” When the researcher asked why, the respondent answered, *“Men are better sellers than females.”* - P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00.

Women revealed that they always do an injustice to themselves, in the way they treat themselves. Times have changed and both the woman and husband’s incomes are required to survive in today’s challenging economic environment.

Several women felt that men are more logical when it comes to business and that women are more emotional. Participant P08 indicated that this makes women better sales people when it comes to hospitality industries.

“Women have the advantage; where they will talk to their customers, inquire whether their customers are happy. Women are more susceptible towards feedback. Women will ask for advice, where the males will not.” - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug. 16:30.

The women often relied on their husbands to do maintenance work at the business and felt that builders would rather listen to their husbands. Participant P01 also highlighted that society regards a woman as soft and that people need to change their perceptions. *“Women are stronger than men. People always want to wrap a woman in tissue paper. This perception needs to change. Women are strong and they are survivors.”* - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

Women may be better survivors than men due to their instinct to protect and to provide for their family, should the husband fail to do so. Most of the women’s incomes for start-ups came from their own personal saving, the husband’s financial assistance, and inheritance or divorce settlements.

Women felt that they are more critical about themselves than their male counter parts. In addition, most of the women referred to their fathers as the business people who had the greatest influence on their decisions.

3.3.16 Information sharing

3.3.16.1 Women entrepreneurial inquiry

Information sharing relates to what women entrepreneurs would like to hear from other women entrepreneurs. The women are very excited and curious individuals. Most of the women wished for feedback after the research study.

The women in general did not have specific role models, and they referred to family and friends as mentors. Only two participants, P01 and P15 indicated that they had female role models, both referred to women in history, like Florence Nightingale.

Women in general preferred mentors in the form of friends and family members, however responded they would like to get advice from other women entrepreneurs. They wanted to know if the other women interviewed had the same challenges, how they dealt with these challenges and how their husbands felt about their wives as entrepreneurs. Women also wanted to know how the other women entrepreneurs balanced their work life with domestic and family responsibility and whether they are as critical on themselves and their staff. The majority of women indicated that they would like to know what the other women entrepreneurs thoughts were when they started their own businesses.

Participant P02 indicated that women entrepreneurs do not share information easily, due to their fear of admitting they sometimes struggle.

3.3.16.2 Women entrepreneurial advice

The most predominant themes in the study related to hard work, determination, making a conscious decision to succeed, having guts and to never let negative people influence you. The women revealed you need working “on” your business, not “in” your business. They are very positive and continuously referred to the importance of a positive outlook. In addition, women feel that you need to plan for success, recommend that you need to negotiate the best price with suppliers and look after your cash flow. They regard money as expensive and state that one cannot afford to not make a success. The women emphasised that you need to save

and re-invest your profits into the business. *“Re-invest in your business. You can reap the benefits later.”* - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

Women in general felt that you need proper research with actual figures to support your business decision. *“Ask for advice and invest in a financial advisor.”*- P12, Vanderbijlpark, 14 Aug. 12:00, *“Do not leave your finances to anyone else.”* - P03 and P06

Women entrepreneurs recommend that women be innovative and to deliver excellent service delivery. *“Distinguish yourselves through quality service delivery.”* - P07, P08 and P12.

Women entrepreneurs recommend that you take your product as close to the consumer as possible and thereby avoid added operational and storage costs. *“Do not underestimate the price of holding cost.”* - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

A good workforce is required for any business owner. Women supported the statement and highlighted the importance of building your business with good staff members, as they will be the pillars of the business. *“You will only be as strong as your people.”* - P01, P11 and P12

“I always look for staff that can perform certain duties very well. When you interview a candidate, make sure they are the right person for that specific job.” - P14, Vaalpark, 01 Sept.14:30.

Women entrepreneurs recommend that you have a passion for what you do and that you need to believe in your product. *“How do you expect other people to believe in your product, if you do not?”* - P06, Vanderbijlpark, 20 Jul. 13:00.

The businesswomen revealed they try to distance themselves from cynical and sceptical individuals, however recommend receiving constant feedback from your customer, whether it is positive or negative. Women entrepreneurs are critical on themselves and their staff members even though they recommend that you should not be too critical.

“You need to take advice from positive and negative feedback to grow your business. Talk to your customer. You will be amazed how many ideas come from your customer” - P08, Vanderbijlpark, 02 Aug.16:30.

The women in general highlighted the importance of marketing your product, and to do feasibility studies before you attempt any business. Participant 15 recommended you sometimes have to ask for a lower selling price. *“I sometimes need to give the customer a lower price. You never know what business you’ll get out of it.”* - P15, Vereeniging, 8 Sept. 8:00.

3.4 ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT

The estimated economic impact made by the businesses of the women interviewed is significant. The researcher estimated that if 642 employees were paid R3 440 monthly (the minimum rate as suggested by Treasury (2016:9), the 15 women entrepreneurs contributed R2.2 million per month or R26.4 million per year to the South African economy. The researcher only provides an estimate and considered the following limitations in her findings:

- The calculation is based on an estimate, at a minimum rate of R3, 440 (excludes higher income brackets);
- The calculation does not include the turnover, investment income and monies paid to suppliers/external parties;
- Does not include the women entrepreneurs’ contribution to South African Revenue Services;
- Does not include investment in tangible and intangible assets;
- Does not include the contribution to Corporate Social Responsibility (Donations and charity work);
- The calculation is based on 15 women entrepreneurs, limited to the Vaal Triangle region.

The researcher considered projecting the finding of the study over 20 and 50 women owned businesses. The researcher provides the calculation after considering that two of the women participants employed significantly higher number of staff members. Participant P01 and P12 employed 120 and 400 staff members respectively. The researcher therefore provides the following projection:

Table 3.4: Economic impact: findings from the study

Findings from the empirical study	Amount	Calculations
Total amount of employees	642	[Per findings]
Minimum monthly wage	R3,440	[Per Treasury]
Total remuneration per month	R2,208,480	[642 x R3,440]
Total remuneration for the year	R26,501,760	[R2,208,480 x 12]

Source: Compiled by the researcher

Table 3.5: Economic impact: projection 1

Projection 1	Amount	Calculation
Total amount of employees	122	[Note 1]
Average number of employees per business	9	[122/13]
Minimum monthly wage as suggested by Treasury	R3,440	[Per Treasury]
Total remuneration per month, per business	R30,960	[9xR3,440]
Total remuneration for the year, per business	R371,520	[R30,960x12]
Total projected remuneration for 20 businesses	R7,430,400	[R371,420 x 20]
Total projected remuneration for 50 businesses	R18,576,000	[R371,520 x 50]

Note 1: Participant P01 employed (120) staff members and P12 (400) out of a population of 642 employees, the researcher thus used 122 employees [=642-120-400] and 13 [=15-2] number of women entrepreneurs from empirical findings.

Source: Compiled by the researcher

The projection shows that 20 additional entrepreneurs with the same employee and business structure may possibly contribute R7, 430,400 (per annum) to the local economy and 50 additional entrepreneurs at an estimated contribution of R18, 576,000 (per annum).

The researcher thereafter provided a second projection where participant P01 and P12 are not eliminated from the calculation and provided the following result:

Table 3.6: Economic impact: projection 2

Projection 2	Amount	Calculation
Total amount of employees	642	[per findings]
Average number of employees per business	43	[642/15]
Minimum monthly wage as suggested by Treasury	R3,440	[Per Treasury]
Total remuneration per month, per business	R147,920	[43xR3,440]
Total remuneration for the year, per business	R1,775,040	[R147,920 x 12]
Total projected remuneration for 20 businesses	R35,500,800	[R1,775,040 x 20]
Total projected remuneration for 50 businesses	R88,752,000	[R1,775,040 x 50]

Source: Compiled by the researcher

Projection 2 revealed that 20 additional entrepreneurs with the same employee and business structure may possibly contribute R35, 500,800 (per annum) to the local economy and 50 additional entrepreneurs at an estimated contribution of R88, 752,000 (per annum).

The figures are based on estimates and the researcher recognised the limitation of her projection. The researcher however attempted to calculate the probable impact women entrepreneurs have on the economy. Women entrepreneurs are reluctant to share business information relating to revenue income, purchases, expenses, and also the contribution and profit margins. The researcher as a result, used the number of employees and the minimum monthly wage to calculate the possible economic impact. Evidence from the study suggests that women entrepreneurs significantly contribute to the South African economy, however, only relates to employee remuneration, and does not include factors identified and documented as limitations.

3.5 SUMMARY

Chapter 3 discussed the results obtained from the empirical study, which addressed the research questions. The findings indicated that the Schumpeter's theory on entrepreneurship offered valuable insights on women entrepreneurial behaviour. The motivational theme that proves most significant relates to the ideology of success, self-accomplishment and passion.

The significant barriers to entrepreneurial and business success relate to unfavourable economic conditions, human resources and time constraints. The Schumpeter's theory of innovation comes to work when women entrepreneurs want to sustain and grow their business, for they regard innovation, the ability to change and adapt as a primary strategy to business and entrepreneurial success.

The study revealed that the Schumpeter's Theory is appropriate and relevant for understanding the behaviours of 15 successful Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs. The findings of the study support the findings of David Ray (2004:196), as practical theory provided valuable insights into the study of women entrepreneurship. The researcher provides conclusions, recommendations and transitions into social change in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the research study was to investigate the strategies employed by successful women entrepreneurs in the Vaal Triangle to navigate their businesses towards growth and sustainability and to address business challenges. The researcher attempted to gain insight into the behaviours and processes employed by these women and their business practices. The study also explored the demographic profiles of the women; investigated their unique business characteristics, how they took advantage of opportunities and the unique barriers they faced with regards to entrepreneurial and business growth.

Schumpeter's theory of entrepreneurship provided the theoretical basis of the research study. The Schumpeter's theory regards an entrepreneur as someone who is intuitive and innovative, who performs activities without being over analytical, someone who is creative, inventive, and who have the ability to overcome self-doubt, who conquers uncertainty and who manages unfavourable surroundings (Loh & Dahesihsari, 2013:108).

The themes and findings emerging from the study were discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 revisited the primary and secondary objectives of the study, critically analysed the results and addressed the research objectives. This chapter provides conclusions and recommendations and reports the final thematic analysis utilising the fifteen themes. The researcher reflected on the insights gained from the study and considered the practical implications the study may have on upcoming women entrepreneurs in Vaal Triangle and on the creation of an entrepreneurial culture that will address the need for transition and social change. The researcher thereafter provided recommendations for future research.

The study investigated the platform in which women entrepreneurs operate and share experiences. The researcher considered the profile of the successful Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs, their motivations for new venture start-ups, the characteristics contributing to their successful businesses, the challenges they face and the strategies they use to navigate

towards business success, in order to get a better understanding of the phenomenon of the successful woman entrepreneur.

The researcher concluded and made recommendations, however recognised that because the study was limited to a sample population of 15 successful women entrepreneurs situated in the Vaal Triangle only, results may not necessarily be generalised over the total population of successful women entrepreneurs.

4.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The results of the research study, obtained by interviewing 15 successful women entrepreneurs operating in the Vaal Triangle, supported the Schumpeter's theory on entrepreneurship and innovation. The findings from the empirical study revealed that women entrepreneurs are not only innovative, they have the ability to identify opportunities and to act upon it. The researcher provided a summary of the personal and business profiles of the women entrepreneurs, their main motivational factors for starting businesses, the challenges they face, and the strategies they follow. The researcher concluded the section with women entrepreneurial inquiry.

4.2.1 The importance of women entrepreneurship

Globally women entrepreneurs play a critical role in reducing poverty, encouraging economic growth, creating jobs and in overall improving the socio-economic conditions of a country. The women entrepreneurs are economic agents who create a business culture by promoting economic growth and innovation and creating a platform in which other women entrepreneurs can operate and share experiences. It is this culture that encourages social change and provides direction for future generations of entrepreneurs entering the market. It encourages job creation, assists in the identification of new business opportunities and contributes to the improvement of socio-economic conditions of a country. This is especially valuable in a country like South Africa, which faces numerous political, economic and social challenges.

South Africa was recently downgraded to junk status. Herrington *et al.* (2016:67) highlighted that unfavourable political and economic forces in South Africa not only had a negative

impact on the welfare of South African citizens, but it also contributed to a technical recession and GDP growth setback. This resulted in the unemployment rate reaching a high of 27% (40% expanded rate), which especially impacted the youth. When coupled with all the economic, social and political challenges, South Africa is in dire need of entrepreneurs who have the ability to operate under uncertainty and who will engage in production to generate economic growth (Zimmerer & Scarborough, 2008:5). Entrepreneurs are the economic agents that will identify and exploit opportunities (Van Aardt *et al.*, 2008:4), within South Africa.

The literature recognises that women entrepreneurship is increasingly becoming a significant force in Africa, with significant growth potential (Oluwatoyin, 2010:3348). Women entrepreneurs are enablers. According to Deborah *et al.* (2015:39), women entrepreneurs are creative, they are able to identify opportunities and to act upon it. They are able to improve or alternate existing products and services. If these women entrepreneurs could be economically empowered, they will create a culture where upcoming entrepreneurs can be developed and also become economic agents. Improved entrepreneurship will not only assist in addressing the economic growth challenges in South Africa, but entrepreneurs will also become role models and contributors to social and cultural change. This will address unemployment and poverty, and generate a culture which will create a future for next generations.

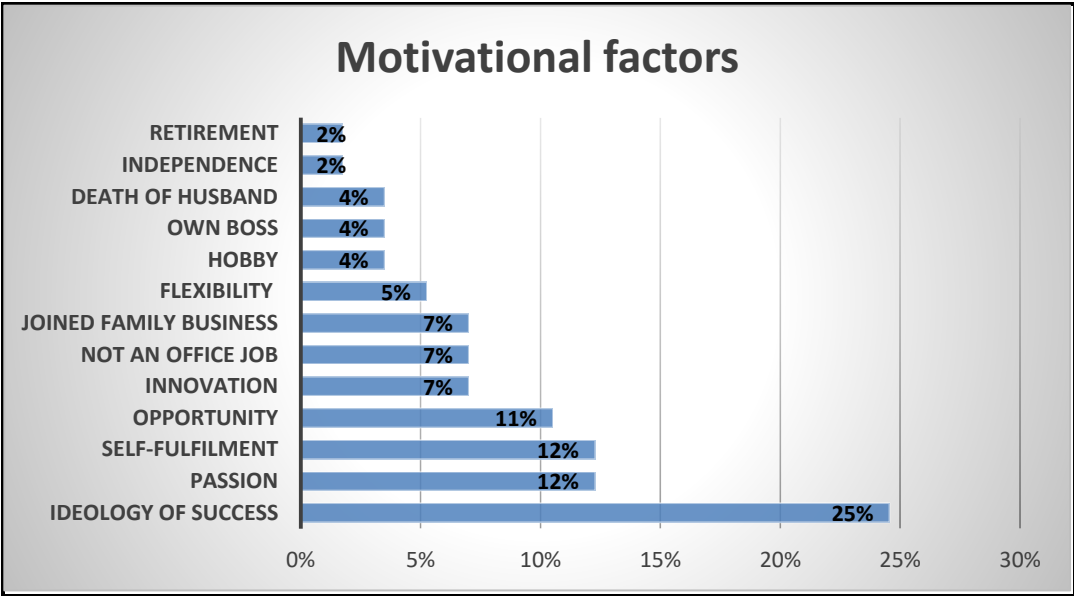
4.2.2 The Vaal Triangle woman entrepreneur

The women participants interviewed were all curious individuals with positive outlooks and they were enthusiastic to participate in the research study. The women were surprised that anyone could be interested in what they do. They are strong, intelligent and passionate, and they all believe in hard work. Many of the women grew up in family businesses, mostly from farming operations.

According to literature, women are rapidly entering family businesses globally and these businesses often grow faster than non-family businesses (Ernst and Young, 2014:1). In contrast, the empirical study revealed that the women participants were not particularly interested in joining the family business, instead, preferred to run their own businesses. The researcher considered what motivated the women to start their own businesses in the first place and found that the women were driven by the ideology of success, passion and self-

fulfilment, which they would not necessarily achieve if they joined a family business. The researcher also considered the significance of women joining or not joining family businesses and found it to be an area that merited future investigation. The empirical study supports the findings of Tadria (2007:4), that women entrepreneurs are not so much driven by economic gain but rather by the ideology of success. The following graph (graph 4.1) provides an illustration of the most significant motivation factors for women to start their own business.

Graph 4.1 Motivational factors



Source: Compiled by the researcher from results of the study

The results of the study revealed that the women were motivated to launch their businesses primarily by three factors: ideology of success and self-accomplishment, passion and opportunity.

The women from the researcher’s study were older than the average women entrepreneur, and belonged to the 50- 59 category. This finding correlated with what was found in the GEM Women’s Report. This report showed concerning results for young African women entrepreneurs. The report revealed that globally, the average age for women partaking in entrepreneurial activities ranged between 25-34, but that there was a lack of young women entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan countries where women entrepreneurs were on average in the 45-54 age categories (Kelley *et al.*, 2017:23).

Results from the empirical study revealed that the women participants generally came from privileged backgrounds and that they were well educated and qualified with at least a diploma or a degree. A study by Stander (2015:97) also revealed that her research participants were well educated and that they came from privileged backgrounds. The researcher recognises that this is not always true for women in poor communities. In contrast, literature revealed, the lack of training and education posed a significant barrier to women entrepreneurship (Groenewald, 2007:273; Mandipaka, 2014:1188; Herrington *et al.*, 2016:31).

The majority of women used the internet as an educational platform and recommended that other and upcoming women entrepreneurs use online tutorials and articles to emotionally and intellectually empower themselves. Similar to findings of Stander (2015:103), the women participants regularly made use of *You Tube* to educate themselves and referred to the internet as the most powerful information resource in identifying opportunities and running a successful business.

The research study supports Meyer and Landsberg (2015:3858) findings that women entrepreneurs often have a fear of failure and a fear of rejection from society, should they not succeed. The participants were perfectionistic and overly critical of themselves and their staff. The researcher considered that the fear of failure and rejection from society may be a contributing factor to the women being hard on themselves and their staff.

It was evident from the interviews that the women were committed, focussed, had perseverance and personal strength even in the uncertain economic conditions. It is during uncertain times where entrepreneurs need commitment, courage and perseverance. The most important trait however was the determination to succeed. The research study supported the findings of Irene (2016:76) which highlighted that an entrepreneur requires personal strength, high commitment levels and the ability to set and achieve goals, in order to achieve personal and business success. KPMG (2015:3) revealed similar findings in their research study, when interviewing 204 successful founders of 5,000 leading women-owned enterprises.

The women interviewed used three primary sources of financing to start their ventures, firstly from own personal savings (severance packages, inheritance or divorce settlement), secondly from husbands who took out overdrafts against their mortgages and thirdly from family members who granted them interest bearing loans. The findings reinforced the study by

Meyer (2009:57) which also found that Emfuleni women participants used own personal savings to start new businesses (41% of the study population compared to this empirical study which represented 40% of the population). According to literature, access to finance is a significant barrier to women and in addition highlights the challenge of accessing debt finance is a source of business failure (Mandipaka, 2014:1189). The empirical findings challenge some of these views on limited access to finance. However support the view that high debt may cause business failure.

The study revealed that the majority of women interviewed operated in the hospitality and entertainment industry, with only 12% of the participants operating in the industrial manufacture sector. This supported the World Bank (2016:1) findings that women entrepreneurs tend to focus on lower growth and profit sectors, which normally includes the retail and service industries and generally excludes technological advanced and construction sectors.

Meyer and Landsberg (2015:3858) highlight numerous challenges that affect women entrepreneurs and emphasise the lack of insufficient business management skills as a barrier to entrepreneurial success. The empirical findings challenged Meyer and Landsberg's views on lack of sufficient business management skills, for the majority of women previously worked and managed family businesses. The findings also revealed that some of the women, prior to starting their own business, were in a position of authority. The researcher also considered that the women were older and were experienced women entrepreneurs. Only one participant did not have business management experience, however had a diploma in accounting, with significant marketing exposure, which the researcher considered, contributed to her business success.

The businesses were typically aged between 6 and 15 years and on average employed 15 staff members. This is in contrast to Meyer's (2009:56) study on Emfuleni women entrepreneurs, which revealed her research participants' businesses was relatively new and belonged in the 2 – 5 years age category.

The empirical study revealed that women have on average two or more businesses. The researcher also considered one of the financial strategies is to distribute business risks by diversifying investment portfolios and deliberated on whether it was the reason why the

majority of women had more than one business. The Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs contribute significantly to the local economy. The findings of the study confirmed this, for in the sample population of only 15 women entrepreneurs, women were able to provide employment to over 640 individuals only in the Vaal Triangle area. This study supports Meyer (2006:17) in her view that women entrepreneurs not only engage in business activities to generate profits but also to enhance social and employee welfare within the community.

4.2.3 Business challenges

According to literature, women face numerous business challenges which create barriers to entrepreneurial success. Stevenson (2010:287) describes a “challenge” as an event where an individual’s ability is tested, and relates to a circumstance, action or event that creates a barrier to progress. Horn *et al.* (2009:90) defined a barrier as an obstruction that prevents movement, drive and access. Great intellectual or physical effort is required to overcome the barrier successfully. The study revealed that the Vaal Triangle woman entrepreneur is experiencing great uncertainty in the current economic recession even though she is generally highly optimistic and full of energy.

South Africa is suffering a severe recession and a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth set back. Unemployment, a weak job generating capacity and significant high-income distributions are contributing to inequality and poverty (Herrington *et al.* 2016:67). The women interviewed confirmed that poor economic factors contributed to lower than expected growths within their businesses. Retrenchments in the mining and engineering industry had an immediate impact on some businesses, with additional higher than expected consumer and product price indexes. Larger mining and steel companies had to cut down on costs and this affected the women-owned businesses significantly, especially the women who sell luxury products and services. The women found the uncertainty to be an overwhelming experience.

Herrington *et al.* (2016:71) requested a reassessment of the regulatory constraints on small businesses and raised concerns regarding government inefficiency to stimulate the South African’s SME sector (Herrington *et al.*, 2016:71).

South Africa not only experienced numerous political, economic and social challenges, but also a severe drought which caused higher than expected consumer and product price inflation, which again contributed to lower than expected economic growth. The environmental factors mostly affected the women in the hospitality and agricultural industries as most activities are performed outside. The women in farming relied on rain for their crops to grow, women in the hospitality industries required good weather conditions for families to enjoy themselves in outside entertainment areas and vendors needed to sell their products on flea markets. Bad weather conditions greatly influenced businesses during the winter and rainy seasons. The drought in 2016 caused farmers to have financial difficulties and this resulted in higher food prices, higher storage costs and necessitated the women to delve into their personal savings. The Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP) highlighted that the 2015/2016 drought not only caused reduced domestic production, but also caused a global shortage in maize, as Sub-Saharan African countries are reliant on maize from South Africa. The drought also contributed to higher food inflation as a significant amount of maize had to be imported (BFAP, 2016: ii).

“We suffered a 100-year drought last year. One needs to have a diverse portfolio to mitigate insolvency risks” - P01, Sasolburg, 03 Jul. 10:00.

Human resource and time management posed as a significant barrier to the Vaal Triangle women entrepreneur, supporting the findings of the study by KPMG (2016:3). The women entrepreneurs do not want to grow their businesses due to family responsibility time constraints and they do not trust their employees to run their business for them. The women often do not want to grow their businesses due to the fear of losing control over the business and of losing clients. The findings are similar to those of the GEM 2016/2017 Women’s Report, which found that the fear of failure caused women entrepreneurs not to respond to opportunities that may contribute to businesses success (Kelly *et al.*, 2017:28).

Women also have the challenge to divide their time between family and work life, and often require sound family conflict management skills. This supports studies by Fortuin (2016:44) and Meyer (2009:31), which also discusses this issue. Moreover, women participants revealed that employees needed constant reassurance and rewards as motivation to perform tasks even though they are paid to do it. The women who sent their employees on training programs felt that the programs were costly and did not significantly benefit the business.

Good human resource management is an integral requirement in successful businesses (as discussed by Smit and Chimucheka, 2014:162). Despite the importance, the study revealed that human resource management posed a significant barrier to women entrepreneurial growth. Women entrepreneurs regard good employee relationships, reliability, hard work, honesty, and trustworthiness as key elements required for successful businesses (similar to findings by Tadria (2007:4)). The women participants from the study struggled to hire the right people, who are able to perform the work and who have a loyalty towards the business. The lack of employee accountability, loyalty and responsibility caused the women entrepreneurs to distrust their workers. This posed a significant problem for the women entrepreneurs, as successful businesses rely on effective human resource strategies within the managerial function. In addition, employees are often illiterate and do not have the required skill. The research participants reinforced the statement and explained that youth are often not willing to start from the bottom, work themselves up and often lack the skills to perform certain tasks. As mentioned earlier, the youth's participation in entrepreneurial activity also drastically declined (Herrington et al., 2016:7-8).

“I want to grow my business and need skilled hairdressers but I have difficulty finding people that are both qualified and skilled to cut hair. Most of the women have the qualification, however do not have the ability to cut hair properly. Most of the young women complete their qualification in beauty and rich parents provide the funding for their business. These businesses never succeed. The women need to realise business is not as glamorise as it seems. You need to commit to hard work and have experience in business administration. There is more to owning a business than meets the eye.” - P05, Vanderbijlpark, 18 Jul. 08:00

In some instances, cultural differences caused males in the construction industry to disrespect the women in authority. The study supports the earlier study conducted by Jalbert (2000:16), which revealed culture and social practices significantly influenced the role of the entrepreneur within societies. These cultural, social practices and traditions often create barriers for women entrepreneurs.

Women participants often lacked formal financial and business strategies and used outside consultants for short and long term financial planning. This is in accordance with findings by Chiloane-Tsoka and Mello (2011:1449), which found that women tend to think in terms of qualitative factors rather than quantitative factors. This may be the reason why the women

participants were reluctant to talk about financial and business strategies. Foster (2016:85) also highlighted the importance for women entrepreneurs to develop strategies that promote growth and profitability.

Most of the participants struggled to complete administrative tasks and found compliance with tax laws a significant problem. The women were often uncertain whether they are in compliance with regulations. The study supports Deborah *et al.* (2015:42) view that women knew their shortcomings and also frequently relied on outside consultants to provide advice and guidance for improved performances. This may be a significant barrier to successful entrepreneurship.

Marketing also poses a significant barrier for women entrepreneurship. Similar to the findings of Stander (2015:102), the Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs often relied on word of mouth as a marketing tool, however explained that this method posed a significant business risk, should negative word of mouth be spread about their businesses. The women participants emphasised the importance of marketing but often lacked marketing skills, which the researcher found concerning. Van Scheers (2010:5055) placed emphasis on the importance and need for marketing skills to engage in successful businesses. Van Scheers findings, similar to the research study, found a lack of market exposure among women entrepreneurs and regard the absence thereof as a significant barrier to women's entrepreneurial success. The researcher explained that an effective marketing strategy may determine the success or failure of a business.

The women seldom regarded their competitors or felt threatened by them, but rather compared themselves with other women in similar industries. This was in contrast to the finding of Deborah *et al.* (2015:42), which stated that women entrepreneurs identified their competitors, followed their strategies and identified their positions in the market.

Similarly to the findings of Stander (2015:102), the Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs often rely on word of mouth as a marketing tool, and yet again explained that this method poses a significant business risk, should negative word of mouth be spread about their businesses.

The majority of women are older, aged between 50 and 59, and lack of knowledge about technological developments on social media is one of their main concerns, the findings are

also comparable with Stander (2015:69), where older women revealed they struggled with social media. The study revealed that the older women often referred to exploration of the internet as marketing tool, however required the younger generation to assist them with it. The women participants emphasised the importance of marketing but often lacked marketing skills, which the researcher find concerning. Van Scheers (2010:5055) also placed emphasises on the importance and need for marketing skills to engage in successful businesses. Similarly to the findings of Stander (2015:96), women often used *Facebook* and *Instagram* as their method of advertising, and used *Pinterest* for idea generation.

Women franchisees relied on the franchisor to perform the marketing function but often felt that the franchise group is not marketing their product sufficiently. Franchise set-ups also pose a business risk of unfavourable brand reputation as one of the research participants experienced. The researcher found it concerning and documented it as an area that merits investigation.

The women entrepreneurs generally had a lack of women role models and they refer to friends and family members as mentors. This finding supports the studies of Meyer and Landsberg (2015:3858) and Mandipaka (2014:1190).

Networking is crucial for business success (Emrich, 2015:100). Women entrepreneurs often refer to networking as a good marketing tool and in contrast to GEM 2016/2017 Women's Report (Kelly *et al.*, 2017:33 & 42) felt that belonging to a professional network is too expensive; they do not have the time to attend meetings and indicated that they had very few referrals from the formal networks.

The results of the study revealed that women felt they had to build trust in their customers but that the clients are sometimes unreliable. This specifically related to women trading in flea markets and outside entertainment area where the women often relied on the client's deposits to cover expenses, which may not realise in rainy conditions or when the customer cancels. The women entrepreneurs cannot control the situation, which cause frustration when they cannot recover the costs they incurred, and a culture of distrust is created among stakeholders. The study supports findings by Raman, Anantharaman and Ramanathan (2013: 22) which stated that women entrepreneurs are individuals that often have high levels of distrust and normally wants to be in control.

Furthermore, personal factors may enormously impact women entrepreneurs and can positively or negatively affect business's success. Women entrepreneurs have a positive attitude and ensure good customer relationships by being friendly, open and by showing appreciation towards their customers (Deborah *et al.*, 2015:42). The Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs regard women as better communicators than their male counterparts and believe that due to this reason, they are better in business.

Despite all the business challenges, the women are innovative, are initiators, with good organising skills, generally have a positive outlook, even though the South African economic climate creates great uncertainty in sustaining business ventures.

4.2.4 Success strategies

The women entrepreneurs in the research study engaged in extensive planning and research activities which are market and customer focussed. The study supports Van Scheers (2011:5056) view and similarly found that women regard market research as very important for any entrepreneur, before engaging in new venture start-ups, and also for sustaining businesses.

The women recommended investing in continuous planning and constantly assessing the market using marketing and customer surveys. According to Van Scheers (2011:5056), women entrepreneurs perform market research to determine market demand, investigate the needs of the customer and formulate marketing strategies to identify their value proposition. In contrast, Sabdia (2015:22) felt that entrepreneurs do not require too much planning and the entrepreneurs should rather focus on testing of ideas, however felt that the combination of planning and learning might be beneficial.

The women often referred to the value of money and that women in new venture start-ups needed to plan and do sufficient market research. The women entrepreneurs tended to be very analytical when it came to market research. The majority of the women participants placed emphasises on market research planning and especially liked to refer to the phrase: "*you need to plan to succeed*", and felt that the lack thereof may result in business failure. The study supported Foster's (2016:22) view that planning is crucial for any business to succeed. Sabdia

(2015:58), on the other hand, argued that entrepreneurs should not be too over analytical and not engage in “over- planning” activities.

Innovation is the corner stone of business growth and sustainability. Innovation is a process of identifying the best ideas and acting upon them, which in return, generates creative ideas, which lead to innovative actions. Innovation is the foundation for any successful entrepreneur. Okpara (2007:5) feels that innovation leads to creative and original ideas and emphasised innovation requires creativity. Similarly, the Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs regard innovation as the most important aspect to grow and sustain a business. They constantly look at their products and services and try to find innovative ways to either improve the product or introduce new products onto the market that nobody else has to offer. The women entrepreneurs furthermore, recommend other women entrepreneurs to provide a product that is different, something you will use yourself and you know that other people will want to buy. An innovative product, market demand, the right attitude, hard work and commitment to success will ensure business growth and sustainability. The study supports Deborah *et al.* (2015:42) view that entrepreneurs often determine their value proposition and reflect why their clients select to buy their product, rather than the competitor.

Customer satisfaction is the success factor of any business. The Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs explained that your customers’ needs always have to come first and felt that women entrepreneurs performed better at this function than men, due to their higher sensitivity towards their customers. The study supports the view of Meyer (2009:38), which also highlighted that women have the benefit of being more sensitive to the customer’s needs. The women moreover, recommended that you constantly enquire about your customer’s satisfaction or whether they need you to improve or replace your product or service and recommended that one perform customer surveys at least annually.

The Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs felt that public demand is the best indicator of the need for new and improved services and products. Women entrepreneurs often provide lower selling prices to ensure they enlarge their customer base. Once you have your customer, you can systematically raise charges. The statement supports Deborah *et al.* (2015:42) study which mentioned that women entrepreneurs often have the benefit to provide products and services at lower cost than larger firms. Entrepreneurs negotiate supplier prices to have lower input cost, thus contributing to higher profit margins. Foster (2016:13) emphasised that

women entrepreneurs need to focus on higher profits by ensuring attention is given to price and benefitting from higher earnings opportunities.

Some of the women entrepreneurs invested in business expansion and actually moved to locations closer to their target market. The study revealed that women relied on their cash flow and prospered as a result of sound cash flow management. The women felt that, especially when starting up a business, one needs to carefully consider the financial costs and not to underestimate what debt can do to a business. They advised that women require sound financial skills to engage in successful ventures and recommended that other women entrepreneurs re-invested their profits within their businesses. The women further recommend that one do extensive financial planning for off-peak seasons and unfavourable environmental factors and feel one should have enough savings to carry one through this period.

The participants moreover, showed an element of distrust and explained one should not leave the management of one's finances to staff members but to rather perform this function yourself. The women often relied on outside experts to perform this function. The results support Verwey's (2006:4) views on the importance of sound good cash flow which is a significant factor for women to ensure businesses sustainability. Entrepreneurs require good business management skills; these include sound bookkeeping skills, cash management and search for opportunities to invest in business expansion (Hoe *et al.*, 2012:138). Deborah *et al.* (2015:42) also highlighted the importance of accounting and financial management practise to ensure business success. Similarly to the research study, the researchers also found that their women participants also made use of external financial consultants to assist in planning and investment.

The Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs relied on the support of family and friends and found it quite handy to use them to perform certain operational duties, thereby decreasing the operational cost of the business and assisting in managing time constraints. This corresponds with Stander's (2016:81) findings that women often use family and friends to perform certain business functions.

The women from the research study planned, performed research and used scenario-planning techniques, with the recommendation to have a diverse portfolio, thus distributing business risk. The women used this strategy to ensure when one business fail you will have another to

mitigate risks of insolvency. Women often use the expertise of a financial broker to assist with the financial planning function, with focus not only on the short-term, but also on long-term planning. The study supports Garg and Duvenhage's (2014:453) view on women being more risk adverse than men, however do take calculated risks. Smit and Chimucheka (2014:162) explained that entrepreneurs need to take risks in order to sustain and grow businesses.

The study showed the successful women entrepreneurs depend on business resources, which include a good management team, financial advisors and premises to market their businesses. The entrepreneur needs a resilient workforce and to hire the right people to support the business. The women participants highlighted that employees need to be loyal to you and your business, and take responsibility and accountability for the business. This finding is supported by the study conducted by KPMG (2016:2), which revealed one of the "growing pains" is recruiting the right people for the job. The women further recommended having the right infrastructure that supports your business operations, whether you market your business premises visually or whether you communicate with your customers electronically. One needs to bring your product and services as close as possible to your clients, thereby eliminating the intermediary suppliers and reducing storage and operational costs.

Similar to the study conducted by Sabdia (2015:47), the women entrepreneurs regard improvement and change as a significant factor to grow and sustain the business. The women advised that, should you neglect this function, business failures are inevitable. The study showed that the women constantly assessed their products and services and often asked friends and family members for advice, enquired about the client's needs and acted upon it. The successful women entrepreneurs continuously looked for new opportunities in the market to either improve or create new products or services. The women felt responsible for the environment and identified opportunities such as trading in natural compost, earthworms, tin and plastic collection. The researcher considered the opportunity in the market and documented the topic merits future investigation.

Women entrepreneurs further recommended you have to know what worked for your business, but that you need to be innovative concerning old and new products and service delivery. They recommended that you perform customer surveys and use the internet as a tool to guide you in identifying opportunities and to heed advice from family and friends. The

women emphasised that one needs to guard against negative and sceptical people. The women in addition, believe in continued growth and they empowered themselves through online tutorials and by reading books. These findings supported the study by Stander (2015:102,105).

The women were in general happy to just sustain rather than to grow their businesses. They recommended that women entrepreneurs, working from home, move to premises where they can visually display the business. The women explained that the surrounding businesses have an impact on your business and the proximity of business to the customers is very important. Some of the women in the educational sector moved their business to be in close proximity to schools while the women in construction moved to industrial areas. The women in the hospitality and entertainment industry preferred to be situated in good residential areas, but closer to the central business district (CBD). Buthelezi (2011:28) however warned that when an entrepreneur only seeks opportunities in the area in which they are situated, they may limit growth in the economy's entrepreneurial development.

The business women recommended strong networks to grow their businesses, especially strong customer, supplier and employee support networks, however did not want to be part of formal networks where they have to pay and attend meetings. The women regarded word of mouth as a strong networking skill and often referred clients to other entrepreneurs themselves. In addition, the participants recommended that all women wanting to start their own business ventures engage in efficient networks with suppliers, customers and employees. The women also made use of rotary network systems and engage in community projects. The study somewhat challenged Hoe *et al.* (2012:137) view that women participants place emphasises on the importance of business associations and networks, by mentioning that networking contributed to their business success where women would often share business information and objectives.

Women entrepreneurs often engage in social welfare projects through rotary clubs, churches and other welfare organisations. Figure 4.1 illustrates the women participant's preferred network structures.

Figure 4.1: Network structure



Source: Compiled from results of the study

Figure 4.1 reveals the Vaal Triangle women entrepreneur's network structure. The women entrepreneurs relied significantly on word of mouth and regarded *Facebook* and *Instagram* as the preferred electronic platforms for networking. Women in franchise set-ups relied on the franchisor to provide ample networking opportunities. The participants often referred to the Vaal Triangle Rotary Club and regard the rotary club as a networking system, and in addition supported the local community. Only one participant belonged to a formal network association and none of the participants relied on government institutions for business support.

The women often relied on the support of men and indicated that the roles of males and females have changed significantly. This agrees with the study conducted by Fortuin, (2016:44), which revealed that the success of women in business is greatly influenced by spousal support. Cheung and Halpern (2010:185) explained that women often rely on their husbands to play a significant role in functions relating to domestic duties and in these cases, the marriages are relatively successful. The women interviewed advised other women entrepreneurs to realise their female weaknesses and to get assistance from men who can strengthen these weaknesses. A study conducted by Tadria (2007:8), in addition revealed that women entrepreneurs recommend that women do not enter into business partnerships with husbands.

Women entrepreneurs are emotional business decision makers and they have the benefit of being better with customer relations, innovation and market research, in comparison to men who tend to think more logically about making decisions. Due to this emotional factor, women may do well in business where it is easier to identify opportunities and act upon them. A study conducted by Shmailan (2016:3) revealed similar results, which discovered that women find it more difficult to make decisions.

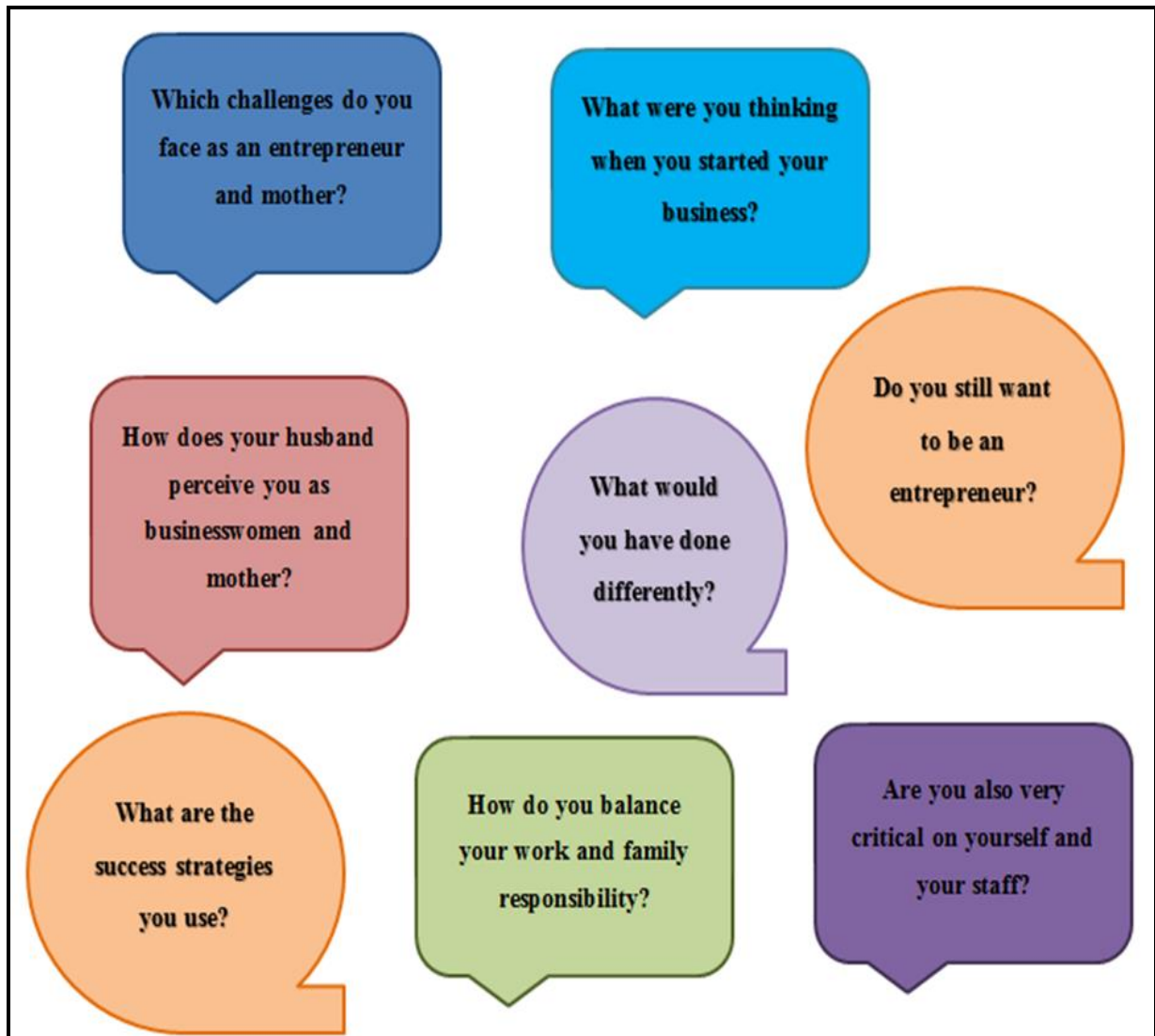
Religion was a significant emerging theme from the study. All women participants in the study referred to religion as a form of business strategy to overcome entrepreneurial difficulties. The women explained that just when they think they are not going to be able to pay salaries the month, something comes their way and they just know it comes from God. Limited studies on religion and women entrepreneurship are available in the literature. The study supports earlier scholars such as Adam Smith and Max Weber who recognised the influential role religion have on economics (Audretsch *et al.*, 2007:2) and found that women entrepreneurs relied on religion to carry them through difficult times.

The next section (4.2.5) relates to questions women participants wanted to asked other women entrepreneurs which the researcher categorised under women entrepreneurial inquiry.

4.2.5 Women entrepreneurial inquiry

Figure 4.2 shows the general questions women mentioned they would have liked to know about other women entrepreneurs with similar business outlooks.

Figure 4.2: Women entrepreneurial inquiry



Source: Compiled from results of the study

The majority of women wanted to know whether other women entrepreneurs face the same difficulties as they themselves in their businesses. Another significant inquiry was of how other women entrepreneurs' balanced family and work life. Many women asked what the women's thoughts were when they originally started their businesses. The women were very curious and excited when it came to information sharing. It was clear that the women entrepreneurs had a need to know about other women entrepreneurs, how they handled the challenges and the way they ran their businesses.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study sought to explore the characteristics of successful women entrepreneurship in the Vaal Triangle, with specific focus on the strategies the women entrepreneurs employed for business growth and sustainability by performing phenomenological interviews; and to investigate practical theory as a form of entrepreneurial learning, with specific focus on woman entrepreneurship. This section highlights the success strategies women participants recommended to other women wanting to start new business ventures, who are engaging in businesses aiming for growth and sustainability and to also advise other women entrepreneurs wanting to pursue careers in entrepreneurship.

The women research participants recommended numerous strategies that may assist other women, who want to start, sustain and grow their own businesses. The recommendations are summarised with the aid of the research questions and a 5-Point Action Plan in Figure 4.3.

Research Question 1: Which strategies do the successful Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs employ to navigate their businesses to success beyond 3.5 years?

Figure 4.3: 5-Point Action Plan



Source: Compiled from data obtained from study

The following detailed 5-Point Action Plan is presented to achieve growth and sustainability for new and existing women businesses.

Table 4.1: 5-Point Action Plan – Detailed summary

5 -POINT ACTION PLAN (AP) for growth and sustainability

AP 1: Invest in planning and continued research

Women entrepreneurs need to plan and continuously do research on:
1. New and innovative products and services.
2. Technological advances in business processes.
3. Identification of good opportunities and new market trends. (<i>Pinterest</i> and <i>YouTube</i> is a useful tool for generating ideas).
4. Conduct customer and market research surveys at least once a year.
5. Use friends and family for idea generation.
6. Invest in continued training: Attend conferences and training programs, read books, view online tutorials on entrepreneurship, business and financial management skills. <i>YouTube</i> is a powerful educational tool.
7. Perform research on innovative ways to save the environment.

AP 2: Invest in sound financial strategies

1. Re-invest your profits within your business.
2. Utilise outside consultants to assist with short and long term financial strategies and planning.
3. Invest in a diversified portfolio to distribute financial risk.
4. Invest in good cash flow management strategies.
5. Do not leave the financial function to your staff.
6. Use family and friends to perform operational tasks where possible to reduce operational costs.
7. Take your product as close to the consumer as possible, thus eliminating intermediary and storage cost.
8. Request deposits before you transact, to at least cover operating expenses.
9. Keep up to date with business administration, know where you are and know

where you are going.

AP 3: Invest in good customer relations

1. Know your customer; determine your customer's needs and determine what they would like you to improve in terms of your products or services.
2. Perform customer surveys to determine customer satisfaction and their need for new or improved products and services.
3. Use your customer as an information resource; always be open to their suggestions and recommendations.

AP 4: Have fundamental marketing strategies

1. Word of mouth is a strong marketing technique, but women should realise that it can be positive or negative.
2. Use *Facebook* and *Instagram* as a less expensive way of marketing your products and services and use it as a powerful networking tool.
3. Use the younger generation to assist in the marketing function; they always have innovative and new ideas.
4. Relocate your business from home to an area where customers can visually see your business.
5. Support your local rotary organisation, it provides good networking opportunities.
6. Advertise in the local newspapers.

AP 5: Have resilient human resource management strategies

1. Empower your employees and look after their wellbeing.
2. Provide incentives to motivate them (not necessarily monetary rewards).
3. Educate and train your employees, you need to remember they work with your customers.
4. Use outside labour consultants to deal with unfavourable diversity and cultural issues.
5. If you are good to your employees, they will be good to you.
6. Never lose your temper in front of your staff.
7. Set an example to your staff.

Source: Compiled from data obtained in the study

The second research objective is to investigate practical theory as a form of entrepreneurial learning, with specific focus on women entrepreneurship. The practical theory is based on entrepreneurial enquiry from successful women owned businesses.

Research Question 2: How can qualitative practical theory contribute to women entrepreneurial learning and development?

The results from the interviews showed that women are entering the entrepreneurial field mostly due to their passion, creativity and for augmented income but sometimes also for survival purposes. Women entrepreneurs regard themselves as equal to men and felt that women and men have the same entrepreneurial barriers.

The following recommendations were derived from practical theory from the interviews with successful women entrepreneurs on advising other women wanting to pursue careers in entrepreneurship.

Table 4.2: Entrepreneurial advice

Recommendations(RM) for women wanting to pursue their career in entrepreneurship
RM (1): Focus on the market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure there is a market demand for your product. • Do not enter markets that are over supplied. • First test the market before you start to invest in a business. • Get the advice from professional consultants. • Investigate your competition with regards to the product and service you want to offer. • Remember large retailers may provide similar products at more competitive prices. • Determine what you can do to make your product or service special. • Make sure you have reliable figures when you purchase an existing business. • Find innovative ways to save the environment, there are lots of business opportunities. In addition, you will positively contribute to saving the planet.

RM (2): Personal success factors

- Plan for success, be determined and do not let people get you down.
- Never give up, have faith, have faith in yourself, avoid negative people, be determined and go for it.
- Always be willing to take advice.
- Remember where you came from.
- Dress the part, never wear revealing clothes, men will not take you seriously.
- Be self-confident in the face of critics.
- Remember other women are also facing similar challenges.
- If you never try you will never succeed.
- Do not take yourself too seriously.
- Always stand up after you fail.

RM (3): Considerations when buying a new business

- Have passion, be motivated and determined and committed to hard work.
- Identify products and services for which there is a market demand, be innovative and introduce products and services you would want for yourself.
- Plan for success; make sure you have the necessary experience, business skills and knowledge required for starting the business.
- Invest in a role model or mentor who you can look up to and who have sufficient knowledge and skills to support you through your journey.
- Attend conferences, training programmes and use the internet as an educational tool.
- Engage in proper planning:
 - Identify market demand.
 - Perform feasibility studies and determine the viability of the business.
 - Use the public to gather market information.
 - Ask for advice from role models and mentors.
 - Obtain feedback from the public, family and friends.
 - Use outside consultants to support your decision making process.
- Sources of financial support available:
 - Use your own personal savings if possible.
 - Alternative: obtain support from friends or family members for loans or security.

- Explore private and public sector initiatives.
- Perform research on women entrepreneurial associations.
- Ask mentors to advise you on accessing finances.
- Ensure you invest in sufficient networking activities:
 - Invest in associations that will support your business.
 - Invest in good networking and identify good opportunities (customers, suppliers and employees).
- Invest in employees that are loyal, have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience and having a similar outlook as you on the business.

RM (4): When purchasing an existing business

- Have actual financial figures to support your decision.
- Invest in an outside consultant to assist in decision-making.
- When buying a franchise make sure that:
 - You understand the terms and conditions.
 - The franchise provides business support.
 - The franchise offers products relevant to the current market.
 - They provide sufficient advertising and marketing support.
 - You obtain actual figures that support your decision.
- Ensure you have a competitive advantage and introduce value-adding propositions to your products and services, which distinguish you from the competitor.
- Women entrepreneurs continuously refer to people and the environment and propose other women investigate the feasibility of the recycling business industry.

Source: Compiled from data obtained during the study

Recommendations and insights from the researcher

The researcher considered the motivation for these women to engage in new venture start-ups and recommend that before focussing on business ownership, the women should first invest in thorough planning and brainstorming to generate ideas, identify opportunities, and think creatively and innovatively. This can be achieved through the development and improved creative and cognitive (intellectual) thinking. The researcher suggests that women entrepreneurs engage in online research; attend private and or public programs; visit expo's to broaden their vision; to invest in mentors or consultants; to speak to other business people or role models and invest in continued research.

The prospective women entrepreneur should perform extensive market research and do customer and marketing surveys; use crowdsourcing (using the public) for idea generation and enquire from established entrepreneurs. The entrepreneur should look for suitable role models to provide personal, entrepreneurial and business support.

Business management skills are very important and prospective entrepreneurs should place high importance on business skills such as strategy formulation and implementation; business and financial management; operational management; human resource and marketing management. Women should develop their networking skills and develop business networks within the external and internal business environment.

The researcher found that some of the women entrepreneurs have a fear of not complying with laws and regulations; they do not have the time to attend to business administration, sometimes lack marketing skills and may experience difficulty when dealing with unfavourable employee disputes. It is advised that the women entrepreneurs make use of external consultants to perform some of these duties to reduce any fear of non-compliance and to assist in reducing unfavourable labour disputes.

The study revealed that the Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs would typically focus on the sustainability of their businesses rather than to grow it. This may be due to perfectionism, a fear of losing control over the business and the lack of trust in their employees. The researcher recommends that women entrepreneurs empower themselves and through improved emotional intelligence address their personal weaknesses. The researcher further

suggests that women entrepreneurs empower their staff members to enhance their business and operational skills which will, in return, improve customer satisfaction, accountability and responsibility for company property and work duties. It will improve employee morale if employees are able to take some initiatives, improve diversity, address cultural differences and improve conflict management. Entrepreneurs should try and focus on activities to grow rather than just sustaining their businesses.

Information sharing is important and women entrepreneurs should consider the support and informational resources presented in Figure 4.3.

Table 4.3: Support and information resources

• Invest in mentors and business role models;
• Attend training programs, perform online tutorials and read books;
• Ask family and friends for advice;
• Invest in outside consultants;
• Explore women entrepreneurial organisations providing services;
• Investigate government training and support initiatives.

Source: Researcher recommendations

Before approaching the government and private institutions for support, women first need to empower themselves. There are many successful women entrepreneurs who have the creativity, the ability and innovation to effectively utilise factors of production, without requiring owned capital. Resource sharing is also an option. The researcher regards an entrepreneur as an individual who are able to create something with the minimum resources.

The researcher suggests women create a network where information sharing, supplier contacts, customers and employee information are exchanged between businesses. Rotary clubs and informal networks are valuable as support resources for women with similar outlooks. The researcher recommends that women entrepreneurs shift their focus away from the barriers that prevent entrepreneurship and to rather focus on the motivation of women entrepreneurs and the success strategies they employ.

The researcher recommends that women do not focus on gender discrimination, but rather on identifying women's weaknesses and to find innovative ways in which they can utilise the strengths of men as support, while still controlling their own destinies.

The researcher noted that women entrepreneurs in construction experience greater diversity and cultural issues and recommend that these women explore SAWIC for emotional and business support. SAWIC empowers women in construction in the field of non-traditional and provides support in identifying job opportunities, providing training, finance and supporting networks (SAWIC, 2017:1).

The researcher recommends women entrepreneurs use the online tutorials and articles provided by private and public institutions to explore topics of interest. The online tutorials assist in development of management and business skills and are valuable to improve emotional intelligence. The women interviewed indicated that they have limited time and they do not have the time to sit in regular meetings. Online tutorials and training will address this problem as training can be done when it is convenient for the person.

The researcher further suggests private and public initiatives make free online tutorials available with an all-inclusive package. Women can explore topics in which they have an interest and a passion for, which includes topics on emotional intelligence as well as management and business skills. In exchange, women entrepreneurs will have to share information. For women to access the tutorial, they will in exchange have to contribute through information sharing. The information may include sharing business statistics [for example: personal profiles, demographics and the business industries]; Share business challenges and experiences, networks [for example share at least one networking contact] and share identified business opportunities.

The researcher also suggests women entrepreneurs create a *South African Women's Wikipedia* where women can share information regarding their businesses, promote good entrepreneurial and business books and tutorials that will benefit other women, and also provide information on private and public associations should the women require it. This *Women Wikipedia* will provide a free platform where South African women can express themselves, the challenges they face and success strategies they employ to navigate themselves through business growth

and sustainability. This platform will also serve as a medium to market their product and service.

The researcher considered the impact of *WhatsApp* and *Facebook* and recommends that women create groups on these forums where women can network and advertise. When women participate in these groups, posts must only be business related, which include advertisements, products or services inquiries, contacts and network sharing. People can leave the group if they are not interested.

4.4 CONCLUSIONS

The study findings support Schumpeter's theory regarding an entrepreneur as being intuitive and innovative, someone who performs activities without being over analytical, who are creative, inventive, and have the ability to overcome self-doubt, who conquers uncertainty and manages unfavourable surroundings (Loh & Dahesihsari, 2013:4). Women entrepreneurs in this research study were predominantly motivated by the ideology of success, of self-accomplishment and by a self-fulfilment prophecy. Women wanted to sustain rather than grow their businesses and they rely significantly on creativity, innovation and continued improvement, which reinforced the Schumpeter's theory on innovation. The researcher therefore promotes the use the Schumpeter's conceptual framework when researchers investigate the phenomenon of women entrepreneurship.

The study showed that the women were often over-analytical, however, have the determination and ability to succeed even in the face of unfavourable political, economic and environmental challenges. This is contradictory to the findings Sabdia (2015:58) which argued that entrepreneurs should not be too over analytical and engage in "over- planning" activities. Loh and Dahesihsari (2013:4) also found that women entrepreneurs are not over-analytical and often have a lot of self-doubt, even though they were determined to conquer uncertainty and have the ability to manage unfavourable surroundings.

The research study applied practical theory, as described by David Rae, (2004:196), referring to the term "What we do" while effective practitioners ask, "What works for me?" to try and make sense of the women entrepreneurs' experiences and to describe "What works?" and

“Why it works”. The practical theory, obtained from the study, relates to decision-making, dealing with uncertainty, problem solving and the practices of relationship management (David Rae, 2004:196). The researcher obtained valuable information from the study and propose to scholars to use the qualitative research design to explore the women entrepreneurial phenomena and by using practical theory, gaining a more in-depth understanding of women entrepreneurs.

4.5 ACHIEVEMENT OF THE STUDY OBJECTIVES

The success of the research study depends on whether the primary and secondary objectives, in Chapter one defined in section 1.5, were achieved.

The primary objective of this study was to first explore women entrepreneurship in South Africa, with specific focus on the strategies employed by women entrepreneurs for business growth and sustainability through long phenomenological interviews and secondly to investigate practical theory as a form of entrepreneurial learning, with specific focus on women entrepreneurship. The researcher aimed to gain practical theory through in-depth interviews with successful women entrepreneurs.

In order to deal with primary objectives, the following secondary objectives must be addressed and included the following:

- To obtain a general profile of successful women entrepreneurs though the literature review.
- To analyse entrepreneurial characteristics of successful SME’s women entrepreneurs with their unique business characteristics, with specific focus on women trading in the Vaal Triangle area.
- To investigate the challenges they experienced and the strategies they used to overcome these challenges.
- To gather information on how to interview successful women entrepreneurs, to build a framework of strategies to respond to barriers of entrepreneurial and business growth.

- To determine whether qualitative in-depth interviews will contribute to women entrepreneurial learning and development.
- To make suggestions to enhance women entrepreneurship in South Africa.

The study met the following objectives:

- **To obtain a general profile of successful women entrepreneurs through the literature review.**

The literature review provided information to ensure secondary research objectives were met.

- **To analyse entrepreneurial characteristics of successful SME's women entrepreneurs with their unique business characteristics, with specific focus on women trading in the Vaal Triangle area.**
- **To investigate the challenges they face and the strategies they used to overcome these challenges.**
- **To gather information on how to interview successful women entrepreneurs, with the purpose of building a framework of strategies to respond to barriers of entrepreneurial and business growth.**

The findings of the long phenomenological empirical study assisted the researcher and provided valuable information regarding success strategies used by the Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs to overcome barriers to entrepreneurial success. The discussions and findings in Chapter 3 and the recommendations in Chapter 4 support these research objectives. Chapter 3 and 4 also ensured the final research objectives are met:

- **To determine whether qualitative in-depth interviews will contribute to women entrepreneurial learning and development.**
- **To make suggestions to enhance women entrepreneurship in South Africa.**

The researcher relied on both the literature and the phenomenological empirical study to ensure primary and secondary research objectives were met with the purpose of exploring

strategies and barriers to women entrepreneurial endeavours and to show how the practical theory contribute to women entrepreneurial learning and development.

4.6 CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The target population for this study was 15 successful Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs with small to medium businesses, who were able to navigate their success strategies to engage in viable (> 3.5 year old) businesses aiming at growth and/or sustainability. According to Groenewald (2004:11) and Creswell (1998:65,113), a researcher requires to select at least 10 research participants to reach data saturation point in phenomenological research studies. The researcher considered that ideally, for similar research studies, a wider demographic scope and larger sample population should provide more insight into the strategies women entrepreneurs employ to navigate towards business success. Enlarging the research scope and sample size of the study will provide enhanced qualitative insights into women entrepreneurial activities; the challenges they have to overcome; the opportunities they face and their strategies for business success, while navigating towards growth and sustainability of their businesses.

Numerous research studies have been done on the characteristics and barriers for women to enter into the entrepreneurial field, but relatively few studies explored the strategies women entrepreneurs followed to overcome barriers to business growth and sustainability in South Africa and this leaves an opportunity for further exploration.

Future research could explore the factors contributing to women entrepreneurial success in quantitative research settings, which could again provide a framework for the development of women owning businesses, while aiming at growth and sustainability.

The current qualitative phenomenological research study can assist other researchers to develop quantitative surveys using larger population sizes and demographic scopes.

The following research areas merit investigation:

- Micromanagement of businesses and its effect on growth in women owned enterprises.

- Feasibility and impact studies on women entrepreneurs engaging in the recycling business [e.g. trading in natural compost: earthworms, tin and plastic collection].
- The development of women entrepreneurs in family businesses [to join, or not to join];
- The relationship between religion and South African women entrepreneurial endeavours.
- Challenges women face in franchise setups, with specific focus on business support. [What do women expect from ventures in franchising? Do franchise agreements support the business function? Does the franchisor test new products when introducing it to specific areas? How much can women entrepreneurs rely on support from franchise ventures?].
- Investigating the challenges faced by business women in construction; strategies to overcome diversity and cultural challenges.
- Feasibility and impact studies on networking with agency agreements, e.g. airport agencies advertising hospitality industry.
- Investigative studies on the effect of family responsibility on entrepreneurship with specific focus on the changing roles of males and females.
- The impact of surrounding businesses on women entrepreneurial growth and sustainability.
- The lack of young entrepreneurs in the Vaal Triangle.
- The value of support from family and friends on the success of businesses (not receiving payment for services).
- Networking opportunities for women entrepreneurs using social media like *WhatsApp*, *Facebook* and *Instagram*.

4.7 SUMMARY

This chapter concludes the study on exploring the strategies employed by successful women entrepreneurs for business growth and sustainability and secondly to investigate practical theory as a form of entrepreneurial learning. The researcher gained valuable practical theory through in-depth interviews with 15 successful Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs.

The empirical study showed that women entrepreneurs face various challenges, however have informal strategies to navigate through business success. David Rae (2004:196) used the term practical theory to determine “*what we do*” and referred to practitioners asking “*what works for me*” and through reflecting, determining “*what works*” and “*why it works*”. In considering this, the researcher discussed the “*What*” and “*How*” objectives in Chapter 3 and main emerged themes related to motivation, innovation, education, commitment, religion, business challenges, planning and research, customers, financial strategy, required resource, change and adapt, growth and sustainability, networking, gender roles and information sharing.

The women from the phenomenological empirical study made recommendations to other existing women entrepreneurs to engage in business aiming for growth and sustainability and women wanting to pursue a career in entrepreneurship. Advice includes considerable investment in planning and research, sound financial strategies, good customer relations, fundamental marketing strategies and resilient management strategies. The women also advised other women to have faith, be committed, plan to succeed and have timely business information to support the decision making process.

In the conclusion, the results from the study shows that internal challenges relating to time and human resource management poses the most significant barriers for the 15 Vaal Triangle women entrepreneurs. External challenges relate to the current economic climate and environmental changes. The study met all the research objectives through literature and empirical findings. Chapter 4 provided insights from both the literature and the empirical study and the findings sometimes challenged or supported literature. Chapter 4 concluded and the researcher provided considerations for future research that merits investigation. The researcher mentioned that ideally a wider demographic scope and larger sample population should provide more insight into the strategies women entrepreneurs employ to navigate towards business success. The researcher also suggested that future research should focus on business success strategies rather than barriers to entrepreneurship.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research intent: Exploring the perceptions and lived experiences of 15 women entrepreneurs in the Vaal Triangle, in the Gauteng Province, South Africa.

1. The researcher starts with the interview introducing herself to the research participant and there after introducing the research subject;
2. The researcher will express her gratitude to the research participant for taking the time to participate in the research study;
3. The researcher will ask for the consent which will be recorded electronically;
4. The researcher will turn on the voice memo on her electronic device and start the interview;
5. The researcher allocates a participant code to the recorded interview, example (P01) on the digital device;
6. The interview will take approximately 60 to 120 minutes, depending on the women entrepreneur's time constraint;
7. The researcher will remind the women entrepreneurs of the research objectives during the interview process;
8. The researcher prepares a report for member checking after recording and transcribing the information;
9. The researcher thanks the woman entrepreneur for her time and asks for permission to contact the research participant for a follow-up meeting (should the research need to clarify any uncertainty).

APPENDIX B
THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Personal characteristics:

1. Are you married?
2. Do you have any children?
3. Do you have any role models?
4. Do you have an educational background?
5. Did you have exposure to business as a child?
6. What motivated you to start your own business?

Business characteristics:

7. What industry do you work in?
8. How long have you been in business?
9. How many staff do you currently employ?
10. Where did you get funding to start up your business?

Questions relating to their business strategies:

11. Do you want your business to grow and/or sustain your business? Please explain
12. Do you have business strategy to pursue the growth and sustainability within your business? Please elaborate
13. Do you have a financial strategy to pursue growth and sustainability within your business? Please elaborate
14. What resources do you require growing and sustaining your business?
15. What are the major difficulties you currently face in your business?
16. What strategies do you use to overcome the difficulties?
17. Do you feel other women entrepreneurs have the same difficulties?
18. What advice can you give to other women-owned business who wants to grow and sustain her businesses?

Questions relating to women entrepreneurial features

19. Do you think more women are becoming entrepreneurs? Why?
20. What do you think are the major challenges for women becoming entrepreneurs?
21. Do you think it is more challenging for a woman than a man, if so please explain?
22. What difficulties did you experienced as a woman entrepreneur? And still experience?
23. Were you ever part of an entrepreneurial development program to enhance your entrepreneurial skills?
24. Have you considered attending a program for the development of your entrepreneurial skills?
25. Do you know of any institutions that provide programs for the development of women entrepreneurial skills?
26. Which advice can you give to women wanting to become an entrepreneur?
27. Do you feel that interviewing women entrepreneurs can contribute to women entrepreneurial learning and development?

APPENDIX C:

SCHEDULE OF THE NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS ACT

Sector or subsector in accordance with the standard Industrial Classification	Size of class	The total fulltime equivalent of paid employees	Total turnover	Total gross asset value (fixed property excluded)
Agriculture	Medium	100	R5m	R5m
	Small	50	R3m	R3m
	Very Small	10	R0.50m	R0.50m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Mining and Quarrying	Medium	200	R39m	R23m
	Small	50	R10m	R6m
	Very Small	20	R4m	R2m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Manufacturing	Medium	200	R51m	R19m
	Small	50	R13m	R5m
	Very Small	20	R5m	R2m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Electricity, Gas and Water	Medium	200	R51m	R19m
	Small	50	R13m	R5m
	Very Small	20	R5.10m	R1.90m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Construction	Medium	200	R26m	R5m
	Small	50	R6m	R1m
	Very Small	20	R3m	R0.50m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Retail and Motor Trade and Repair Services	Medium	200	R39m	R6m
	Small	50	R19m	R3m
	Very Small	20	R4m	R0.60m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Wholesale Trade, Commercial Agents and Allied Services	Medium	200	R64m	R10m
	Small	50	R32m	R5m
	Very Small	20	R6m	R0.60m

	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Catering, Accommodation and other Trade	Medium	200	R13m	R3m
	Small	50	R6m	R1m
	Very Small	20	R5.10m	R1.90m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Transport, Storage and communications	Medium	200	R26m	R6m
	Small	50	R13m	R3m
	Very Small	20	R3m	R0.60m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Finance and Business Services	Medium	200	R26m	R5m
	Small	50	R13m	R3m
	Very Small	20	R3m	R0.50m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m
Community, Social and Personal Services	Medium	200	R13m	R6m
	Small	50	R6m	R3m
	Very Small	20	R1m	R0.60m
	Micro	5	R0.20m	R0.10m

Source: The National Small Business Act (102 of 1996)