# Women and Business in the Digital Era:

## The impact of social media on the successes of female entrepreneurs in Trinidad and Tobago

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# Abstract

Trinidad and Tobago is a small island with much potential in terms of economic opportunities. It has a highly educated female population, yet this is not reflected into the labour force participation rate, which is the lowest of the Anglophone Caribbean countries. Micro and small businesses are seen as the main source of growth making it an important sector to start a business in.

The expectations and role of women in this country are also changing in modern day society, meaning that many women are less stuck to the responsibilities of the household, and have the agency to choose their occupation. Because of the relevance of social media, many choose to start an online business as they recognize the importance of having an online presence. Yet how does social media influence these online businesses and in what way can they contribute to their level of success?

This research will examine how social media influences the successes of these female businesses. It answers how female entrepreneurs perceive their successes that are in accordance with their motivations and previous expectations. Societal factors of Trinidad and Tobago are then examined to give an understanding of the entrepreneurial environment for female entrepreneurs in the country. Followed up by an analysis of the ways social media platforms can be useful for their businesses and contribute to their success. This multi-level analysis gives an overview of how the concept of female entrepreneurship is a complex phenomenon, embedded in different layers of society.

Numerous in-depth interviews with female entrepreneurs and consultants, a survey among online entrepreneurs, secondary data and a social media analysis have led to the conclusion that the level of success of female entrepreneurs depend on their perception of what success is based on their motivation, experiences, support and expectations of society. Their perception of success will then influence their online behaviour that can be strategic or random. Based on their online strategy social media can be beneficial for their business and lead to success or not. These findings can be an step in comprehending gender, business and online communications in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Key words**: *female entrepreneurship, home-based businesses, s-commerce, social media, Trinidad and Tobago*

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# List of abbreviations

T&T        Trinidad and Tobago

WOM        Word of mouth

HBB        Home-based business

# Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been a widespread theme in academic literature, however, the topic of women's entrepreneurship has been largely neglected both in society and in the social sciences, and is therefore still understudied and underrepresented  (Meenakshi et al, 2013). There is a need for literature on female entrepreneurship to deepen our understanding of the female entrepreneurship domain and by Brush 2006 to 'abandon the assumption that male and female entrepreneurs are the same in all respects' and challenge the belief that entrepreneurship theories are gender-neutral and are applicable to all populations (Brush and Cooper 2012; OECD, 2017).

It was not until the 1980s when research on women entrepreneurship began to appear, as women owned businesses are one of the fastest growing entrepreneurial populations in the world (Buttner, 1993). Besides economic growth and development, female entrepreneurship also provides avenues for female expression and potential fulfilment, which led to a shift in focus to softer issues, including motivations, work and family balance, and non-financial definitions for success (Brush and Cooper, 2012). The latter will be analysed in this research.

Latin American and Caribbean countries continue to have relatively high levels of female entrepreneurial activity, where women have been particularly successful in micro and small enterprises. However, women 's entrepreneurial activities are significantly absent from the literature on women in the Anglophone Caribbean (Barriteau as cited in Esnard, 2006). In general, there is little research on Trinidad and Tobago as well as in the field of female entrepreneurship.

Trinidad and Tobago has a highly educated female population, yet this is not reflected into the labour force participation rate, which is the lowest of the Anglophone Caribbean countries. They also have a large population that is highly involved in using the internet, compared to other Caribbean countries. And by using the internet, more people start to make use of social networkinf platforms. Facebook and Instagram are the two largest social media platforms for social networking in Trinidad and Tobago, with interestingly, a slight majority of female users. Social media is a function of a country's technology, culture and government meaning that Trinidad and Tobago is a technologically advanced country (Berthon et al, 2012; Cesaroni et al, 2017).

Not only does social media display a country's level of technology, it is also linked to the level of entrepreneurship, where ''digitally networked entrepreneurship has been linked to progressive gender politics'' (Duffy and Pruchniewska, 2017). Here, women are seen to be potential target audiences since they have strong characteristics to boost the country's economy, but they also face many obstacles when they want to start their own business, such as family-work conflict, lack of economic and social capital etc. (Mukolwe and Korir, 2016).

Jamali (2009) emphasized the need for a multi-level approach including micro-, meso-, and macro-level of female entrepreneurship and the influences of social media on each of these sectors, can give an overview of the importance of online presence for business purposes. And because social media and female entrepreneurship are both affecting a country as a whole, and because Trinidad has a highly educated female population and an active online population, it is therefore relevant to use a multi-level analysis of the effects of digital entrepreneurship.

Recent years have witnessed a sharp rise in female entrepreneurship in digital contexts, such as fashion and beauty blogs, and craft micro-enterprises where women create businesses that not only enable them to earn income, but also offer flexibility and an outlet for their creative passion's (Duffy and Pruchniewska, 2017). This research will therefore also be focused on the craft micro-sector of female entrepreneurs in Trinidad and Tobago and analyse how social media can influence the success of these businesses?

# Chapter 1: Literature review

A. Entrepreneurship in this new digital environment

**Entrepreneurship in general**

The term entrepreneur is a complex phenomenon including different activities, ventures, types of behaviour, roles and skills that entrepreneurs require for setting up their business (Filion,2011). Examples of these different types of entrepreneurs are social, rural, small business, large business, start-up, technopreneur, and the self-employed. As there is no absolute definition of the term, everything depends on the standpoint or perspective of the author and the aspects and elements which that person decides to focus on (Filion,2011). However, to define entrepreneurs, it is important to look at their activity. According to Filion (2011) one of the primary characteristics of an entrepreneur is the ability to act independently in activities as a result of recognizing an entrepreneurial opportunity, which is often involved into doing something differently and therefore adding value to already existing ideas. Generally, an entrepreneur is an actor who innovates by recognizing opportunities; he or she makes moderately risky decisions that lead into actions requiring the efficient use of resources and contributing an added value (Filion,2011;Evans and Volery, 2001).

However, Evans and Volery (2001) argue that continual change is required for every entrepreneur and his/her business, as a result of a constantly changing environment. Nowadays we live in a new digital environment called the information age, where the diversity of data and the speed of diffusion of knowledge are among the dynamics that make this era different (Genç and Öksüz, 2015). Communication technologies have evolved, making us more connected and closer to each other. Web 2.0[1], which is used to call the development of the Internet to a mean of communication, and the rise of social media platforms, gave rise to s-commerce, a new phenomenon in the world of business and communications. S-commerce includes the usage of social media platform for business purposes. Five years after Facebook became a public company, we have witnessed a mobile and social media revolution that has changed how organizations connect with customers,

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1. Web 2.0 is the second stage of development of the Internet, characterized by the user-generated content and the growth of social media.

but also the meaning of entrepreneurship across the globe (Giones and Brem, 2017).

Therefore, the key to the future of business development lies in the adaptation to change and the implementation of technology-based solutions, such as the Internet and social media, seen as powerful media to convey business development (Evans and Volery, 2001)

**New digital environment**

Nowadays, almost everyone is familiar with social media, as it has become an important element of people's life. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest Skype and WhatsApp are highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities create, share, exchange, discuss and modify user-generate content such as ideas and information in virtual communities and networks (Ahlqvist et al, 2008; Hashim et al, 2017). Besides generating content, social networking is also a useful feature of these social media platforms, which focused on engagement with one another in the form of creating relationships, communicating, building followers and connecting with online audience (Kirschner and Karpinski, 2010 as cited by Hashim et al, 2017).

Worldwide, there are approximately 2.77 billion social media users in 2019 (Statista), which is still increasing every day. In 2018, Instagram had 1 billion monthly active users, Facebook had 2,32 billion, Twitter had 321 million, and LinkedIn 260 million members (Statista). Facebook and Instagram are the two largest ones with the most monthly active users globally. Moreover in 2018, both platforms saw a majority of female users where 53% of the Facebook-users was female and 68% of Instagram-users (Omnicore). Both platforms have their own characteristics and qualities, and therefore, it is interesting to analyse how these two platforms are being used and competing against each other.

As the popularity of social media increases, its usage also differs over several sectors. Nowadays social media platforms are also used in the marketing and communications sectors of businesses, known as s-commerce. The term s-commerce has no specific definition, but generally is defined as ''the use of internet based media that enables users to participate in the selling, buying, comparing and sharing of information about products and services in online marketplace and communities'' (Zhou, Zhang and Zimerman, 2013). The roots of s-commerce are traced to the late 1990s where Amazon and eBay introduced

features that enabled customers to write reviews on products or rate the sellers performance (Busalim and Hussin, 2016). It is basically an online word of mouth concept, where customers have a voice that enables them to be active in the online commerce process.

Busalim and Hussin (2016) point out that s-commerce has three main characteristics that highlight its uniqueness. The first one is *interactivity* between companies and customers as well as among customers. Social media allows customers and companies to interact with each other that help companies to receive valuable feedback from their target audience. It also provides great opportunities to encourage consumers' positive word-of-mouth in the form of online forums, communities, ratings, reviews and recommendations (Hajili, 2012).

The second characteristic is *collaboration*. Social media allows a new co-create environment between businesses and consumers that has changed the passive behaviour of users to become active content creators on the Internet, and therefore are able to influence businesses (Zwass, 2010) as cited in Hajli, 2012. The popularity of social media have a great impact on consumers, allowing them to increasingly engage in online communities by sharing their experiences and information on products, services, companies and brands with other customers and friends, which shifts the power to influence customer's behaviour from organizations and sellers to consumers and customers (Cesaroni et al, 2017; Cheung, Xiao and Liu, 2014 as cited in Busalim and Hussin, 2016).

Lastly, s-commerce *combines* both commercial and social activities (Busalim and Hussin, 2016). ''The characteristics of s-commerce are based on the content and social relationship, which is the key element that differentiates s-commerce from other forms of online commercial activities'' (Liang et al, 2011 as cited in Zhang et al, 2014). Basically, it means that social media platforms are, influencing, facilitating and being used by customers to make a (online) purchase. Experts say that social media will become the Internet's new search function, predicting that people will search for information or make decisions based on WOM recommendations from their friends (Hashim et al, 2017). This will affect the business environment as traditional means of marketing, such as print advertisement, flyers, TV, newspaper and radio, are now being replaced with social media marketing.

As social media continues to gain in popularity and more people are spending their time on it, marketers have to anticipate on this by searching for firm foundation to base their strategic decisions on (Hoffman and Novak, 2012 as cited in Hashim et al, 2017). It is

said that entrepreneurs can take advantage of the possibilities that the Internet and social media can offer because of the reachness of the medium to many potential customers, as well as the two-way interactive experience, meaning that this interaction and cross-communication of social media enables customers and entrepreneurs to exchange views, express opinions and also negotiate on the products and services offered (Hashim et al, 2017).

The main idea is that once you're (online) engaged, people can be swayed toward your goals, which can be very powerful, only if you use the right content (Mukolwe and Korir, 2016). And therefore, the success of small businesses relies on building committed relationships (Schaffer, 2013 as cited in Genç and Öksüz, 2015). To achive these committed relationships, Hajli (2012) found out that trust is a major factor that influences the decision-making process of customers when buying something online and social relationships of customers take an active role in this.

B.  Female entrepreneurship in the digital environment

**Female entrepreneurship**

*1. Entrepreneurship as 'masculine': discourse and language*

The construction of entrepreneurship as a ''masculine'' phenomenon has long historical roots, sustained by country-specific ''cultural, social and economic processes and is embedded in social and cultural attitudes and norms'' (Hamilton, 2013 as cited in OECD 2017). According to Ahl (2002), one needs only to read through the definitions of entrepreneurship to see that it is a male gendered concept, which might be explained by the fact that entrepreneurs have traditionally been men, and women entrepreneurs have been made invisible (Sundin, 1988; Javefors Grauwer, 1999; Stider, 1999), there have been male gendered measuring instruments (Moore, 1990; Stevenson, 1990), and gendered attitudes to entrepreneurs (Nilsson, 1997), and male gendered theory (Reed, 1996; Mirchandani, 1999). Therefore, when speaking about entrepreneurship one can't assume that this will include general entrepreneurship, as the concept itself is already biased with regard to gender.

Ahl's (2002) research has shown that words show a polarity between strong and weak, active and passive, leader and follower, which resemble the dichotomy with which masculine and feminine are often described (Ahl, 2002). As a result of this gender bias of

entrepreneurship, women do not seem to fit the stereotype of a 'typical entrepreneur' (De Bruin et al, 2006 as cited in Javadian and Singh, 2012). Or some women don't consider themselves entrepreneurs in the male sense of the world (Kirkwood, 2009). In overall, there is a discourse on womanhood that is in conflict with the discourse on entrepreneurship. Being a woman and an entrepreneur at the same time means that one has to position oneself simultaneously in regard to two conflicting discourses (Ahl, 2002).

### 2. Motivations

Since the 1980s, the primary theory development around entrepreneurship has been to classify motivations into categories of push and pull factors[2]. Push factors are characterized by personal or external factors and often have negative connotations, such as labour market discrimination, gender pay discrepancies and a need for double income, whereas pull factors are those that draw people to start a business such as seeing opportunities for independence, pursuit of challenge, initiative, creativity, as well as the success and satisfaction derived through entrepreneurship (Kirkwood, 2009; McGowan et al, 2012).

Some would argue that the push and pull theories may have changed over recent years with the advent of the Internet – by reducing barriers to entry into business (Schjoedt and Shaver, 2007 as cited in Kirkwood, 2009). Which is a very interesting niche to research in contemporary times where the popularity of social media increases.

The motivations of entrepreneurs are different per gender. According to Dawson and Henley (2011), previous research has established significant differences in the pattern of reported motivations between men and women, where women are significantly more likely to report personal and family concerns and men more financial and market-led concerns[3]. More particularly, women place less emphasis on money and more on non-wage components, such as personal autonomy and flexibility of self-employment especially to those who are married and have dependent children (Dawson and Henley, 2011).

Here the argument of women being the ones responsible for taking care of the family

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[2]This statement was shared by Hakim, 1989; McClelland et al, 2005; Schjoedt and Shaver, 2007 and Segal et al as cited in Kirkwood, 2009; Gilad and Levine, 1986; Amit and Muller, 1994; GEM report.

[3]These results are also shared by Cromie (1987), Hughes (2006), Kirkwood (2009), Buttner (1993) and the OECD report of 2017.

and seeking for a better work-family life comes into place. These stereotypes will affect women into believing it is their biggest concern to put their family first, whereas the same is not expected from men. With this idea in mind, women are seeking for opportunities to combine personal and professional life, something that entrepreneurship can provide.

Therefore, the motivations of female entrepreneurs differ across countries and over time and can't be generalized as every individual has their own ambitions and experiences. Buttner (1993) found out that male and female entrepreneurs are much more similar in personality characteristics, motivations for initiating venture, management styles, approaches to strategic management, values, and predictors of success than they are different. This means that aside from personal characteristics, there are structural problems in the labour market in combination with expectations from society, affecting the way women are motivated to start their own business. Motivations are the 'whys' of behaviour that drive the initiation or continuation of an activity and determine a person's overall direction of behaviour (Modaressi et al, 2016).

Personal goals and motivations are also an important personal factor, which play a key role in business growth, and it is so important that often a person's motivation has more impact on performance than his/her abilities (Modaressi et al, 2016). Alam et al, (2011) found out that internal motivations of women entrepreneurs are positively and significantly affecting success of female entrepreneurship in small businesses.

### 3. Potential and Success

There is also a gender difference in what it means to have a successful business. As mentioned in the previous section, financial motivations are often more associated with males and non-financial motivations for women. These differences in success factors affect their growth strategies and are reflected in what they want to achieve with their business. According to a GEM report, women have a narrower growth perspective as compared to men because of gender differences in environmental conditions (Modaressi et al, 2016). Differences in growth aspiration is an important factor to the growth and development of women's businesses (Pounder, 2015).

Compared to men, female entrepreneurs expect less of their businesses, including less profits and having fewer employees as their motivations are less revenue-based and more directed toward other, often non-financial goals (Modaressi et al, 2016). These

include, among others, a greater sense of well-being, personal fulfilment, independence, satisfaction and joy, interaction with customers and clients, and the feeling of achievement that came from providing a good quality service (Brush and Cooper 2012; Buttner, 1993; McGowan et al, 2012).

Traditionally, business success is often measured in business growth and financial terms, however self-employment performs an important role for many women that cannot be measured in these traditional terms (McGowan et al, 2012). And by using these traditional measurements, it will result in an unequal comparison between men and women as they have different definitions of business success. It will be evident that female business-owners tend to have 'lower' goals for growth that holds across sectors and over time, in comparison with their male counterparts (OECD, 2017).

Grise (1990) insists that not all entrepreneurial endeavours are about growing big businesses in economic terms so that, as is the case for many enterprises run by women, an equally legitimate measure of success is developing and maintaining a venture that is small and stable, which accommodates family, social and personal life aspects (as cited in McGowan et al, 2012).

## 4. *Social and institutional support*

Men and women may not equally engage in entrepreneurship. Women identify their challenges in starting a business as, greater difficulties in accessing start-up financing, lower levels of entrepreneurship skills, discouraging social and cultural attitudes, smaller and less effective entrepreneurial networks and policy frameworks that discourage women's entrepreneurship (OECD, 2017). In overall, Figure 1 captures the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs are categorized as the 'triple blind' that comprises the lack of access to sufficient financial, human and social capital (Robb and Coleman 2010 as cited in Danish and Smith, 2012; Brush and Cooper 2012). Lack of access to finance, balance professional-personal llfe, lack business management training, advice on creating a business, lack of networking (ACS, 2012).

There is long-standing evidence that women entrepreneurs tend to have entrepreneurial networks that are smaller and less diverse than male entrepreneurs, and their networks appear to have a different composition including family, friends, and educators rather than

| **Financial Capital** | **Human Capital** | **Social Capital** |
|---|---|---|
| Needed at early stage of business | Educated women are the drivers of new businesses | Networking way to gain access to resources needed for business |
| Women tend to have fewer saving to invest in their business | Women tend to have latent entrepreneurial potential that is not realised in real life | Connected to many diverse sources more likely to survive and grow business |
| Lack of government support + perception of entrepreneurs ➔ Difficulties in accessing financing | Lack of government support + perception of entrepreneurs➔ Restrictions and lack of support | Women historically excluded from ''old boy networks'' ➔ Have developed different networking strategies than men |

**Figure 1 'Triple blind' challenges of female entrepreneurship**

business service provides or other entrepreneurs (OECD, 2017). Danish and Smith (2012) found out that motherhood or family embeddedness have been found to directly influence how the entrepreneurial process unfolds, as it influences information networks which are vital for identifying market opportunities.

Many female entrepreneurs indicate that their husbands are their most important source of support and the majority refers to close family as their main source of financial, informational and emotional support (Buttner, 1993; Javadian and Singh, 2012). Besides financial and emotional help, support from family also plays an important role in achieving success (Brush et al, 2009 as cited in Javadian and Singh, 2012). ''A high percentage of married entrepreneurs suggest that there is a need for full support from a spouse in order for the venture to be successful (Pounder, 2015).

However, lower quality networks can hinder the growth and development of their business since network relationships are the most frequently used and trusted source of advice and support for small business owners and if connections bring access to resources (Shaw et al. 2009 in OECD, 2017). Having mainly family members in the social network restricts their access to useful information and will be less likely to interact in market/financial/industry networks.

In overall, social networks are an important factor explaining why some individuals become entrepreneurs, they provide individuals with product and service ideas, and also contribute to one's level of self-confidence, however, this also means that women starting

their business may be at a disadvantage compared to (better connected) male entrepreneurs (Javadian and Singh, 2012; Buttner, 1993; Shaw et al. 2009 as cited in OECD, 2017).

As mentioned in the previous section, men and women have different perceptions of success for their business, yet these ideas also persist among resource providers (Buttner, 1993). As a result of this, there are some legal and, already existing, cultural restrictions that affect women and do not apply to men. These include education, bank lending practices, gender-specific obstacles in the regulatory environment and in women's access to government services (Danish and smith, 2012).

Contrary to the earlier belief that entrepreneurs are a special creed and are born with special traits, entrepreneurship can be cultivated through proper training and financial support (Meenakshi et al, 2013). However, many countries face a lack of government support in the entrepreneurial sector and especially for females (Jamali, 2009). Perceptions about entrepreneurship lead to restrictions and a lack of support, and while it is important for individuals to have a range of choices in the labour market, women tend to have latent entrepreneurial potential that is not realised in real life (OECD, 2017).

### 5. Societal expectations of women

Not only the construct of entrepreneurship is gendered, it also implies a gendered division of labour that assumes that a woman does the unpaid, reproductive work associated with the private sphere (OECD, 2017). Being an entrepreneur – strong, willed, determined, persistent, resolute, detached, and self-centred – requires some time, effort and devotion to a task, leaving little time for the caring of small children, cooking, cleaning, and all the other chores necessary to survive (Ahl, 2002). The idea that men fit the image of a hard-working entrepreneur, away from home, always busy with work leaves the image of women filling in the opposite image of being at home and taking care of the children.

This image that is created for women is deeply integrated into different societies throughout time. The variety of social expectations, norms, attitudes and values, assigned to women by societies, and the roles considered appropriate for them, their family traditions and so forth, all have the potential to act as a hurdle for women's ambitions, expectations, entrepreneurial endeavours, performance and growth (Andersson et al, 2007 and Brush et al, 2009 as cited in Danish and Smith, 2012; Jamali, 2009). This because, in relation to female

entrepreneurship, the normative pillar is particularly salient in the sense that career choices are clearly shaped by what society deems desirable and correct for one sex and that many societies continue to define women through roles associated with family responsibilities (Jamali, 2009).

Gender discrimination[4] is the biggest constraints of women entrepreneurship where girls are socialized differently controlled by social norms, morals, beliefs, practices without any rights and decision-making powers, and as a result of this, many feel a lack of confidence and the responsibility of dual roles (Meenakshi et al). In entrepreneurial endeavours, it affects their ability to raise or secure capital or market opportunities, as women are often subjected to greater scrutiny and the inherent male bias exhibited by gender insensitive loan officers and are therefore discouraged from venturing into business (Ferdinand, 2001). Jamali (2009) pointed out in her research in Lebanon that women complained about traditional male stereotypes that were associated with entrepreneurship, the difficulty of reconciling family and work responsibilities, societal and family pressures, and disapproval of women leaving their kids in pursuit of employment and career success.

Besides a hurdle for entrepreneurial ambitions and endeavours, these gender role expectations also affect the image and legitimacy of women entrepreneurs. Their work that belongs to the 'reproductive' sphere whether done at home or in the public sector, does not count as entrepreneurship, contributing to making women's work invisible in the entrepreneurship literature (Ahl, 2002). Also, this gives actual women's entrepreneurship a lower level of legitimacy, which in turn affects the market position and image of women-owned firms, constrains the mobilisation of critical resources and impedes the full realisation of their entrepreneurial potential (OECD, 2017). The existence of negative reactions about women's roles and capabilities root in these existing gender stereotypes causing women to receive discriminatory treatment from officials and their customers as well as from relatives (Javadian and Singh, 2012). And by giving the woman double responsibilities – work and family – means that she cannot compete on equal terms with a

[4]Gender discrimination; consciously or not, individuals translate ideas about gender into discriminatory behaviours through sex categorization and gender stereotyping. These concern beliefs about traits one gender has or should have, which affect how women and men think and behave. Descriptive stereotyping translates into discrimination (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011).

man in the same line of business, which causes her business to be constructed as secondary and complementary, both to male owned businesses and to her primary responsibility, the family (Ahl, 2006). In overall, women are not perceived as entrepreneurs due to prejudice, social networks and family obligations (Pounder, 2015).

According to the OEDC report (2017), traditional gender roles may also lead women to self-restrict in their business and entrepreneurship activities to ''feminised'' professions, sectors and business fields such as personal services or care professions, and also norms about how different genders should behave may restrict women in access to important resources.

**Online possibilities for female entrepreneurs**

As mentioned in the previous section, entrepreneurship is in academia seen as a 'male' thing, removing the emphasis on female entrepreneurs as just as successful. The ideal of the male entrepreneur as the norm continues to be perpetuated in education, through policies in many countries and by social media (OECD, 2017).

One way the image of an entrepreneur can be influenced is by successful women entrepreneurs who can act as role models for aspiring females. This is highly detrimental in encouraging women to consider entrepreneurship as a career, and to dissipate the enduring perception that entrepreneurship is predominantly male dominated (OECD, 2017; Buttner, 1993). Social media can play a role in this by displaying female-led businesses, and highlighting their journey as well as their successes.

Besides benefitting women entrepreneurs by changing the discourse of what and how an entrepreneur looks like, social media can also play a role in assisting them with networking for their business. These platforms can therefore support them by building virtual communities for networking opportunities (Cesaroni et al, 2017). Women entrepreneurs' ability to take advantage of social media could result from their greater propensity to adopt a community-based approach and to maintain social relationships, and from a greater predisposition to interact with customers and perceive their needs (Cesaroni et al, 2017).

The capability, ability and nature of women to maintain connections and establish social relationships also derives from the Gender Communication Theory that ''assumes that

men display more assertive and proactive communication traits and behaviours, and women more passive and reactive'' (Tran, 2014).

Tannen (1994) mentioned that women's conversations are more oriented towards establishing and cultivating positive, pleasant report with others in order to strengthen connections and community, whereas men's communications were more assertive and primarily focused on report patterns, directed towards achieving typically higher or more wealth-oriented status and results (Barrett and Davidson, 2006 as cited in Tran, 2014). The expectations that women need to communicate in a more transactional ''report-talk''-focused manner like men in order not only to be successful, but also to be accepted in the corporate world is still a widespread belief (Barrett and Davidson, 2006 as cited in Tran, 2014; Duffy and Pruchniewska, 2017). Not only on the workplace, but also on social media females feel the pressure to act a certain way that is expected from them.

Duffy and Pruchniewska (2017) found out that many females were compelled to develop and present an online persona that conformed to traditional prescriptions for femininity that includes modesty and sociality, which emerged from the traditionally masculine-coded nature of entrepreneurship and its markers of success where women have to adjust themselves to book online success.

It's a combination of factors where ''female professionals faced conflicting demands from these social media imperatives, which emerged from a space between masculine-coded indexes of entrepreneurial success and cultural prescriptions for female self-presentation'' (Duffy and Pruchniewska, 2017). They called this a 'digital double bind' where social media opens a platform for women to start a business, but in real life it is actually a reflection of society and its gender norms, where women have to adjust themselves to 'feminine roles' to book online success (Duffy and Pruchniewska, 2017).

This digital double bind, was categorized by Duffy and Pruchniewska, (2017) in three interrelated social media imperatives:

i. *Self-promotion*; is needed to spread the word about your business and to get people to know you, as having an online presence is seen as a symbol of one's professional status and creates an online reputation. Female entrepreneurs emphasized the importance of self-promotion, but in a soft-sell way.

- The main idea is that success comes through the deployment of one's soft or feminized, relational skills, where female entrepreneurs seemed to promote themselves in feminine-coded ways to deflect potential critiques that they were being too 'aggressive' as self-promotion and confidence traits are traditionally associated with - and culturally valued with – in men, women by contrast are expected to adhere to a modesty norm (Smith and Huntoon, 2014). Especially ''women in creative industries are reluctant to market themselves'' as their online activities were shaped by gendered notions of modesty and traditional codes of masculinity and femininity (Scharff, 2015).

ii. *Interactive intimacy*; is the significance of relationship-building, where social media offers a platform to share one's work as well as sharing with friends. Female entrepreneurs also emphasized the importance of building a supportive community of peers online.
- The common assumption about women that they are innately social and expressive which makes them valuable word of mouth promoters, brand advocates and multi-level marketers in a socially networked digital age (Shellnut, 2016). Research suggests that these women's instincts to make connections with and empower others are necessary for success.

iii. *Visibility*; includes the willingness to put the 'self' on public display. Here personal and professional spheres intertwine. Some women are conscious about the type of content that they share online, whereas others have no issues with sharing personal information. There are some risks attached to be visible to a wide audience, where one needs to balance the line between visibility and vulnerability.

C. Home-based businesses and online opportunities

*1. Home-based Businesses*

A home-based business is any business that, instead of a commercial premise, uses the family residential property as a base of operation (Walker, 2008). Just as the concept of entrepreneurship HBBs also deal with a definitional dilemma, but can be defined as ''any

business entity selling products or services into the market operated by a self-employed person, with or without employees, that uses residential property as a base from which the operation is run and the business may be operated full or part-time '' (Anwar and Daniel, 2014).

Some HBBs involve both a home-based component and a non-home-based component (Tipple, 2005). For example; a HBB in cooking food but selling it on a market, or a HBB in making jewellery and selling it together with and other people's products (Tipple, 2005).

Generally, few licenses are required when starting a HBB, and because it makes less revenue then traditional business, in many cases, one does not have to pay taxes. These informal-sector enterprises tend to be 'invisible', by not having licences or formal contracts, and being unregulated and uncounted by official statistics (Tipple, 2005). HBBs generally do not appear in tax returns, labour statistics and other formal-sector accounting procedures and therefore makes it difficult to build up a comprehensive picture of HBB activity in a country (Tipple, 2005).

However, these HBBs do make an economic contribution to local and wider economies in the form of 'jobless growth', as they operate within a distributed network that increase over time due to online availability, but without employing additional staff (Anwar and Daniel, 2014).

Characteristics of HBBs are categorized in table 1 using the acronym *SMILES* of Anwar and Daniel (2014).

| Characteristics HBB | |
|---|---|
| Speed | Short time to start |
| | Few entry barriers |
| | Ease of communicating with others |
| Multiple income | Some involved in more than one form of income generation |
| Inexpensive | Low cost to establish and operate |
| Lean (creating greater value for consumer while using fewer resources) | Being small as many women operate as single founders without employees |
| | Being virtual |
| Smart | Finding creative ways of achieving objective often at low cost |
| | Making links with other firms for promotion |
| | Flexible working hours |

**Table 1 Characteristics HBB Anwar and Daniel (2014)**

### 2. *Work and family life*

Previous studies have suggested that HBBs are predominantly owned by women, leading to them being termed as pink collar businesses[5] (Sulaiman et al, 2009 as cited in Anwar and Daniel, 2014). Many HBBs are founded on skills that are common and limited, such as cooking, sewing, knitting and ironing. The lack of special skill is cited by some writers as one reason why homework is undervalued by both the women who do it and by their manfolk. However, the skill required to turn a household activity into viable HBB should not be overlooked (Tipple, 2005).

The previously mentioned household and family responsibilities are recently being recognised as significant to explaining women's entrepreneurship (de Bruin et al, 2007 as cited in Kirkwood, 2009).

Work and family life are not separate spheres but are interdependent, with permeable boundaries, where roles and responsibilities, as previously mentioned, can merge and clash (Desrochers and Sargent, 2004 as cited in McGowan et al, 2012). One of the most important problems of female entrepreneurs is maintaining a balance between family obligations and work commitments (Modaressi et al, 2016). The domestic role of women of being responsible for the family has its effects on the level of work-life it allows.

Family is seen as an impediment for women to start and run a business, especially for women with small children (Ahl, 2006; McGowan et al, 2012). On of the biggest issues that they face is time management that plays a crucial role as their coordinated various roles as business owner, wife, mother, carer, in addition to the desire for individual personal time and space (McGowan et al, 2012). Some admitted to work considerable amounts in the evenings and at weekends (McGowan et al, 2012). They work around the times that the children are at home and are in need of attention.

Entrepreneurship can play a huge benefit in this as it offers a great level of flexibility, which allows women to balance their work-family life. Self-employment is often argued to offer more flexibility to individuals in terms of how they manage the balance between their work life and personal/family life (OECD, 2017). Some women choose not to return to corporate life preferring instead to establish their own business, in the expectation that it will offer a better balance between work and family (McGowan et al, 2012). There exists this

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[5]Someone who is employed in a job that is traditionally considered to be women's work.

cliché that women are better at multitasking and balancing the demands of a career and home than men, with the general view that once children were in school and required less hands-on parental supervision, working around their needs will become easier (Buttner, 1993; McGowan et al, 2012).

However, in reality this might be not as easy as expected. Working mothers with a multitude of responsibilities are constantly required to juggle and balance the multiple roles that they face on a daily basis, which may be overwhelming and may adversely affect their well-being and health, a large source of stress (McLellan and Uys, 2009).

Another perspective on the work-family life is that family can be seen as a source of inspiration, where women develop their unique skills at democratic leadership, networking and relationship marketing (Ahl, 2006). McLellan and Uys (2009) found out that their participants highlighted the fact that their ability to cope with both work and home life was dependent on their organizational ability and they displayed the quality of strategic planning through preparation for their careers, the planning of a family the planning of daily and weekly schedules to meet the needs of their work and families.

One thing that can affect the work-family interface is through technological and economic changes in terms of the increased use of cellular phones computers and pagers allowing employees to be more mobile (McLellan and Uys, 2009). Also, the working from home trend and technologies that allow individuals to be always at work are manifestations of these permeable boundaries (McGowan et al, 2012). This is an interesting niche to research.

### 1. Handicraft / Art – sector

As a result of this balance between family and work life, business and personal responsibilities, women often choose to keep their businesses small, operate on a part-time basis and work in low profitability sectors such as personal services and retail (Walker, 2008; Thompson et al, 2009).

There is a difference between men and women entrepreneurs in the sectors they decide to establish their ventures. Women entrepreneurs tend to be concentrated in sectors that are usually cheaper, with low barriers to enter, low financial risks, and where they have competitive advantage over men (Carter et al, 2001 as cited in Jamali, 2009; Danish and

Smith, 2012). This limited sectorial choices has serious implications for business credibility (Thompson et al, 2009).

Factors of this are resource constraints, environmental uncertainty and specific female aversion to risk-taking (Andersson et al, 2007 as cited in Danish and Smith, 2012). To get a general idea of what kind of sectors women are involved in, Danish and Smith (2012) found that women in Saudi-Arabia are primarily located in art-based sectors, including fashion, jewellery, interior/design and photography, also beauty salons, retail/wholesale, professional services such as consulting, marketing, PR, event management and education. These sectors are seen as traditionally female, and studies generally indicate that women are well-represented in these areas, women even dominate the handicraft production, but they are still significantly underrepresented in others perceived as male-dominated (Danish and Smith, 2012; Rice, 2010).

However, a research of Pickering et al (2010) in Uganda found out that handicrafts were insufficient as means for income generation, as these women lacked marketing opportunities and a lack of local market as every family had someone who made these products and in order to sell these outside the area they needed to be made in bulk. Craft production can therefore be seen as a social activity or as a creative outlet for women.

In Peru, as researched by (Henrici, 2007), many women who made crafts for sale were not originally artisans as they came from a widely diverse background and make items to sell because money is needed and their typical source of income is insufficient. Their main reason for starting to make crafts is that they are now able to compete in local markets and international export (Henrici, 2007).

In Bangladesh, the handicraft sector does not fundamentally challenge traditional gender ideas about work: it is seen as a female occupation and does not threaten male employment opportunities and this coupled with the rules of seclusion, conditions women's choices (Le Mare, 2012). A recent study has found out that part-time work at home (such as handicraft production) was seen as a good livelihood option: better than the other available work options such as domestic or agricultural labour or working in a factory, but not as good as a professional job (Le Mare, 2012). Even though home-based handicraft production can create the potential for empowerment in the sense that women now have the ability to contribute to the household income, it can also limit empowerment as their work retains an inferior,

secondary and temporary status and the challenge posed to gender identities is contained (Le Mare, 2012).

Handicraft work is done in addition to their domestic responsibilities and should support, not challenge, their roles as a wife and mother. The opportunity to learn new things, to have new experiences, their confidence, and ability to travel were given as benefits of being involved in making handicrafts (Le Mare, 2012). The handicraft industry plays a crucial role in the economy of developing countries (Richard, 2007 as cited in Modaressi et al, 2016).

**Social media usage**

In some ways online s-commerce is no different than offline s-commerce, where people gather in some places not only to buy stuff but also as a place for social function i.e. it is about getting together with other people in a place that facilitates interaction (Kacen, 1998 as cited by Hashim et al, 2017). It does not differ much if it's online or offline, the difference is mostly in their potential scale, reach and ease of sharing and connecting, where home-based interaction is seen as most comfortable (Hashim et al, 2017). The major challenge is to create an online store that is socially rich and which reflects the level of interaction when one visits a store (Kumar et al, 2010; Do-Hyung et al, 2007 as cited in Hajli, 2012).
Research on social media and s-commerce have briefly noted some of the benefits of these social networking platforms that can be applied to micro- and small businesses, as well as to female entrepreneurs and HBBs.

Golderen et al (2008) adopted the term online home-based business which is defines as a business entity operated by a self-employed person working from home selling commodities or services in the market, using the internet as a key mechanism for servicing customers (as cited in Anwar and Daniel, 2014). Moreover, the Internet and cyberspace are viewed as feminine media and potentially liberating for women, as it has encouraged more females to become entrepreneurs (Anwar and Daniel, 2014). It is seen as a reflection of reality where communication and networking skills, often linked to female traits, are mainly used. Therefore, the expectation exists that females can optimally use social media for their business purposes, as they are already familiar with the traits associated with social media, interacting and relationship-building.

A social media page requires low investments and low operating costs, especially for home-based businesses and homemade products (Cesaroni et al, 2017). There are also low

barriers to the use of social media (Mukolwe and Korir, 2016). Businesses are very simple and basic technological literacy is sufficient to manage them (Cesaroni et al, 2017). Facebook is preferred more frequently by small entrepreneurs for its simplistic and user-friendly nature as it requires less technical knowledge in comparison to others (Genç and Öksüz, 2015).

With the Internet and specifically social media, geographical barriers are removed as it becomes easier to communicate with people from all over the world. The only things that are needed are access to the Internet and a social media profile regardless of one's location. This offers the opportunity to venture into new markets, as well as to reach a larger audience including mentors, business partners, friends and social support, which provides them the ability widen their social networks and to build communities to increase business visibility (Mukolwe and Korir, 2016).

Social media also allows sellers to have direct contact with customers as well as the opportunity to get feedback from customers (Mukolwe and Korir, 2016). S-commerce unleashes the power of electronic WOM of consumer as they make decisions based on not only information from the sellers, but also from other consumers (Hashim et al, 2017). The share of positive comments on a brand post is positively related to the number of likes which leads to buying decision (Vries et al, 2012 as cited by Hashim et al, 2017). Direct contact with customers is therefore an important aspect of online businesses as it can make or break your online reputation. Another benefit due to direct contact is the opportunity to provide customized products to the audience, 24 hours online support and an online interactive community (Mukolwe and Korir, 2016)

An important benefit of social media is an increase in sales and return on investment as social media channel product and business information to targeted customers at a minimal cost (Hashim et al, 2017). This can be measured by an increase in the number of fans and advertisement views. An increase in sales can also lead to greater financial resources and enjoy more freedom and financial autonomy (Cesaroni et al, 2017).

Today as a result of technological improvements, the ways of working in the shadow market or HBBs have also been inevitably affected because of flexible working (Genç and Öksüz, 2015). Mobility and flexibility are also promoted by social media, as tings can be done from anywhere at any time, including from home, such as taking care of the family or doing studies in combination with online business (Mukolwe and Korir, 2016). Flexibility provides

indeed a balance between work and personal life, however, it should be noted that by seeing flexibility as an advancement for women's participation in business life, one might reinforce the gender inequalities rather than eliminate (Plantenga and Remery, 2009 as cited in Genç and Öksüz, 2015).

Social media can also affect females specifically. In cases where they were forced to take care of the family, they are allowed to implement or maintain a network and social contacts (Cesaroni et al, 2017). Lastly, some other benefits are more technical as social media platforms have effective research features, cheap publicity and promotion, a young target audience, and capacity to display photos (Genç and Öksüz, 2015).

*4. Challenges of social media*

With the rise of social media and the changing business environment, the main question arises if a business is able to completely function online. In a research of Keller and Berry (2006) they found out that 72% of word of mouth conversations occur face-to-face and only 10% is realized in online environments (Genç and Öksüz, 2015). Another research has shown that 83% of internet users aging form 13-54 visit social media platforms only less than 5% of them frequent these sites for purchase decisions (Knowledge Network, 2008 as cited in Genç and Öksüz, 2015). This suggests that no matter how much the importance of building online relationships with costumers valued; messages might be ignored by the intended audiences in online platforms. (Genç and Öksüz, 2015). And therefore social media platforms are, in some cases, not sufficient for the word of mouth and purchase decisions of customers as compared to in-person business marketing.

Another issue with social media is that it takes time to figure out how it works, how and what to post, and to follow-up on it with no direct results or profits in return. In this case it can be seen as a form of unpaid labour. Jarrett (2015) maps out how effective labour in the context of digital globalization and localized social media community, in actuality relies on reproductive work and would potentially fall into the category of unproductive labour, because the Internet makes any activity inherently 'unproductive' (Gajjala, 2018). When one does not understand how to use social media it takes time to think about a strategy, about how to put your content out and how to formulate your captions, which takes a lot of time. Often these posts don't necessarily lead to sales or an increase in income, meaning that

people spend time on it without any reward afterwards. In this sense it can be compared to unpaid labour, which takes a lot of time with no actual rewards.

Duffy and Pruchniewska (2017) mentioned that their interviewees felt compelled to use social media for building their brand in and understated way, cultivating intimate relationships with audiences and peer networks and sharing their personal lives in a professional context; however these involve additional largely uncompensated labour. ''We contend that such activities must be placed on a historical continuum of devalued feminized work, which includes the invisible, emotional labour of women's reproductive and domestic labour'' (Gregg, 2008 and Mayer, 2013 as cited in Duffy and Pruchniewska 2017).

Mack et al. (2017) were one of the only authors who specifically mentioned the amount of time this type of online engagement requires as a challenge for social media usage. Time-related stress means that it is very demanding. For instance, as business and domestic spaces are becoming intertwined, family members can invade the business time and online customer demands can invade personal family time (Thompson et al, 2009). It is difficult to spend time apart.

Another issue is isolation as a lack of social contact and in-person interaction. With offline HBBs there is some form of face-to-face interactions, for example selling craft products at markets, yet with an online business there is opportunity to speak to people or interact with them.

Another argument regarding time is that social media is ever growing, and anyone can post anything on these platforms. As a result of this, when you post something, you are ''unable to determine target group'' as there is no filter for whom are able to see your post or advertisement, which can lead to wasted time and efforts that can be put into more guided parts of the business (Genç and Öksüz, 2015). It is good to reach a large audience, but in this case social media can be too broad.

Also, some people do have a good social media presence, but lack the knowledge of how to continue with it. They struggle to convert online interaction with customers in the form of likes and comments into company profits (Mack et al, 2017). As Moorman (2015) found out: only 15% able to quantify the impact of social media on their businesses (Mack et al, 2017).

Genç and Öksüz (2015) highlight the fact that everyone can be on social media and have the opportunity to create content. This leads to an (unjust) competition as less qualified

people recognize opportunities on these social network platforms, as well as, duplication or imitation of work (Genç and Öksüz (2015).

Lastly, other challenges are a lack of a social media team, specifically for people who don't know how social media works and how to use it in a way to get the benefits from it, poor Internet connection, handling negative customer comments, lack of knowledge, privacy concerns and what to post online (Mukolwe and Korir, 2016). Also, nowadays businesses must adopt new strategies if they wish to succeed (Kotler and Armstrong, 2011 as cited in Mukolwe and Korir, 2016). If you don't want to be on social media, you already have a disadvantage.

*Conclusion*

This new digital environment opens many opportunities for business strategies and therefore changes landscape of entrepreneurship. S-commerce, the use of social networking for business purposes is increasing in popularity where nowadays more businesses are having an online presence. These online means can affect female entrepreneurship as a mean of changing the expectations of what an entrepreneur looks like and what a woman is capable of. For female entrepreneurs, it is also discovered that the online environment resembles real life business environment, where women feel the need to present themselves in a certain way that is acceptable for doing business. Therefore, online means can affect female entrepreneurship as a mean of changing the expectations of what an entrepreneur looks like and what a woman is capable of. For home-based businesses, social media offers a platform for selling products and services, connecting with others, and balancing domestic and professional life. Challenges are that some people do prefer offline marketing and others lack social media skills and therefore struggle to reap the benefit of it.

# Chapter 2: Regional background Trinidad & Tobago

### A) National Background

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is a twin-island republic (annex 1). The bigger island Trinidad was merged with Tobago into one colony of the British and it was not until 1958 the islands gained independence from them. As a result of colonialism as well as the abolishment of slavery and the need for cheap labour that led to migration, the ethnic composition of the country consists of 40.3% Indian, 39.5% black, 18.4% mixed, 0.6% white (ILO). T&T also has a plural society with a multitude of religions such as Catholicism, Hinduism, Islam (Kirton, 2010).

Politically, T&T has traditionally operated under a multi-party system since independence however, this system manifests itself in a two party contest consisting of the People's National Movement and the United National Congress (Kirton, 2010). Not everyone in the country is confident about this division. *''In a country that is so divided by politics, it is basically two main parties with the aim of staying in power. It is a colonial legacy that is still present in the country''* (Environmental constultant).

When staying in power is the main goal of politics, other issues within the country, such as crime, unemployment, and global issues that affect the country, get easily overlooked, as people in power ''don't think long term. And what you get is that people now tend to adapt to the negative things. We adapt to the crime, to lack of job opportunities, we don't change anything, right'' (Environmental constultant).

### Entrepreneurship T&T

Latin America continues to have relatively high levels of entrepreneurial intent (second to Africa) with Trinidad and Tobago being above average for the region (GEM, 2014). The Global Entrepreneurship Index[6] ranked Trinidad and Tobago as 81 out of the 137 countries,

> **Box 1 Registering a business**
> In theory registering a business is not that difficult, as T&T introduced an online systems for employer -and tax registration to make starting a business easier (World Bank, 2015). But for a side-business this is less relevant and not necessary as 'you need to make a certain amount of money per year'' (Jewellery-maker).
>
> However, information about registering a business is difficult to find. There are official governmental websites with information on it, yet these are often contradictory, outdated and unhelpful so one needs to go to an office (Soap maker). Here time-management plays a role as not everyone has the time to got to an office and wait for long hours to register their business. This will deter some from doing it.
>
> NEDCO and other instances provide courses and workshops on how to register a business, yet these are all paid, and ''not every home-based business owner can afford these''. When at an office, you have to let them do a name search to check the availability of the name and then you can register. Unfortunately, this process

with a GEI score of 24.4 (GEM, 2014). Putting the entrepreneurial climate in Trinidad and Tobago just below world average. Yet, the time to start a business in T&T is 10.5 days, which is faster than the regional average of 31.0 days in LAC, which makes it more attractive to start a business. This links to the fact that Trinidad and Tobago rank among the highest countries in the world on the desirability of entrepreneurship as a career choice among the adult population (GEM, 2014).

T&T is the leading Caribbean producer of oil and gas (Pounder, 2015). However, outside of energy, the pace of diversification has been slow (MSME, 2009). Because Trinidad is so business oriented it may seem inclusive, but it is exclusive to a lot of non-traditional sectors, *''we're still oil and gas in our head''*. It requires a change whereby the goal is not merely to earn a minimum income but to create jobs and wealth; an active promotion of an entrepreneurial culture is an essential aspect of this.

A potential source of growth is the micro, small and medium enterprise sector (MSME Conference, 2009). Entrepreneurship and small business development are important tools for achieving social objectives, including employment creation and poverty reduction. ''The economy in Trinidad is pretty tough so the more money is welcome, so that is why many people tend to work for themselves to get the extra money''. An estimated 90% of all registered businesses in T&T are recognised as micro or small (MSE, 2014).

They face many challenges ranging from access to markets, access to affordable finance and lack of information, difficulty in finding affordable training, which may lead to many businesses operating informally (MSE 2014). Troubles in financing can be linked to the fact that transition economies such as T&T may experience challenges regarding qualifying for funding and various grants from global agencies due to their higher level of income per capita (Pounder, 2015). In most instances, these transitioning nations are still not in any economic position to facilitate the advancement of the full complement of their entrepreneurship sector, let alone the advancement and empowerment of female entrepreneurs (Pounder, 2015).

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[6]*Global Entrepreneurship Index measures the health of the entrepreneurship ecosystem, looking at both entrepreneurial attitudes, abilities and aspirations of the local populations as well as the prevailing social and economic infrastructure*

There are many agencies set up to support entrepreneurs in T&T, according to the 2014 GEM report:

| Category | Institution | Focus |
|---|---|---|
| Ministries and government agencies | Min. of labour, small and micro enterprise<br>Min. of planning and sustainable development<br>Min. of trade, investment and communications<br>NEDCO<br>YTEPP<br>ExporTT | Training, development and support at the community level. |
| International and regional agencies | World Bank<br>YBTT<br>CARIRI<br>Startup Weekend | Programmes for at-risk or marginalized groups such as youth, women or specialized groups such as technology entrepreneurs. |
| University incubators | UWI<br>UTT | Commercial incubation of high potential firms and support of entrepreneurial students. |
| Chambers of commerce | T&T Chamber of commerce<br>AmCham | Mentorship of new firms and support of youth in entrepreneurship |
| The banking sector | Commercial Banks<br>Credit Unions<br>The Central Bank of T&T | Financial literacy, business advisory, and the provision of SME tools. |

**Table 2 Support agencies Trinidad and Tobago (GEM, 2014)**


*Population and labour force*

Trinidad and Tobago has the largest economy of the Caribbean, with a GDP of 22.1 in 2017, (World Bank 4.2). The country has 1.37 million inhabitants (2019) with a slight majority (50,8%) of female population in the country (DataReportal, 2019).

The labour force participation rate[7], is less equal, as females in consisted of 51,0%, whereas males are representing 74,1% of the working population in the country in 2016 (World Bank 2.2). Among Anglophone Caribbean economies, Trinidad and Tobago exhibits the lowest female labour market participation rate, due in large parts to its history of slavery and colonialism and its ethnic composition (Olsen and Coppin 2010; Pounder, 2015). The same unequal balance can be found at the unemployment indicators where female unemployment represent 5.5% of the female labour force compared to the unemployment

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[7]The section of working population in the age group of 16-64 years in the economy currently employed or seeking employment (World Bank)

of males that is 3.6% of the male labour force (World Bank 2.2). Little data on official accounts of Trinidad and Tobago, such as Central Statistical Office is often focused sectors as such as manufacturing, mining, construction, transport, finance, and agriculture, which are not relevant for this research.

*Gender T&T*

T&T is the only Caribbean country to legislate women's unpaid work, since 1996, including agricultural work, care-giving of the sick, the disabled, the elderly and very young; work carried out in and around the household (OECD, 2019).

In 2009, the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs developed the National Policy on Gender & Development to promote the full and equal participation of men and women. It stated that health, education, family, labour, economic, acts of violence, the provision of basic amenities, opportunities for education and training, and fair resources to justice are some of the key areas which impact differently upon men and women (National Policy on Gender & Development, 2009). The policy recognizes workplace issues such as sexual harassment, discrimination, unequal opportunities, and pay inequality, as well as the segregation of the market and cultural stereotypes regarding gender roles that keep women in specific low paying jobs and in the service and care related sectors. For this they aim to foster equitable participation of men and women in income generation and sustainable livelihood strategies while increasing the recognition of unwaged and reproductive work to national development. The policy also recognizes that unwaged work in the home affects the time which women have to effectively participate in the labour market and places limits their personal and life choices. For this they aim to promote recognition of unwaged and reproductive work, unpaid labour, and domestic and family life arrangements.

Moreover, gender roles are dynamic and context-specific and influenced by changing social and economic processes within a given circumstance. There has been a shift in perception of male roles in family relations and parenting over the last decade and in sharing family responsibilities. For this they aim to develop gender aware measures relating to men's critical gender concerns to support their wider participation in familial arrangements, and promote positive notions of masculinity. Together with increased options for women to

enter the education system and life and work options available to women outside the home have accompanied a shift in ideology of what constitutes gender roles within the family.

### B) Female entrepreneurship T&T

Using a gender perspective to look at entrepreneurship in this region, the average of female entrepreneurial activity in Latin America and the Caribbean ranks second highest worldwide (GEM 2017). The World Bank's report on gender equality in Latin America and the Caribbean mention that women have been very successful in business, which becomes stuck in micro and small enterprises (ACS, 2012). One reason for this, is that female entrepreneurs in the Caribbean focus their efforts on one venture, opposed to look for opportunity in risky markets and may even settle instead of looking for growth and opportunities (Pounder, 2015). However, there is limited knowledge into the motivations and entrepreneurial environment for women in this region specifically.

One particular research of Ramkissoon-Babwah focused on the motivations and challenges of female entrepreneurs in Trinidad and Tobago. She found out that the aspirations of many female entrepreneurs to engage in entrepreneurial activity are associated with the so-called 'pull' factors. Here, it is not necessary for women to work on their own, but rather aspire to do so.

Regarding the main challenges in Trinidad and Tobago, female entrepreneurs mentioned the gap in understanding the availability of resources, the lack of support, and the lack of management skills. These motivations and challenges are also measured by the Female Entrepreneurship Index[8] report of 2015 that ranked T&T as 51 with a score of 36.9, below Barbados (43.4) and Jamaica (38.6). Moreover, expectations of female entrepreneurship will affect their level of entrepreneurship as ''*women are the primary household caretaker, they have their monthly and have to deal with so much more*'' (Jewellery-maker). Caribbean female entrepreneurs are facing higher levels of barriers that are socially, culturally and economically challenging to overcome and this seems to differ in their reasons for type of business started and their continuity in the business (Pounder, 2015).

[8]The Female Entrepreneurship Index measures the development of high potential female entrepreneurship worldwide by pairing together individual-level and institutional-level variables into pillars to measure the quality of the entrepreneurial environment and eco-system and women's entrepreneurial aspirations (GEDI).

*Education and Age*

One of the challenges that was previously mentioned, the gap in understanding available resources as well as the lack of management skills, are closely related to education. ''In the Caribbean, education is viewed as the main way of empowering women to be independent, and entrepreneurship comes a close second'' (Pounder, 2015). Differences in educational opportunities between boys and girls derive from the Trinidad's history of slavery, colonialism and the post-second world war era resulting in bias and traditional ideologies of gender roles. (Olsen and Coppin, 2010).

Female jobs are generally characterized by lower pay and worse conditions (Sookram and Strobl, 2008). Educating young girls from a young age about entrepreneurial and management skills, might open new pathways for women and girls to start engaging in micro businesses or in other sectors than previously is expected from them and gives them the opportunity to build their human capital. Ramkissoon-Babwah (2015), also found out in her research on the motives of female entrepreneurs that educational background played integral roles in their motivations to become entrepreneurs. Pounder (2015) found out that females on average do have a higher education level than their male counterparts. The survey found out that 60% of the respondents completed a college/university degree (figure 2).
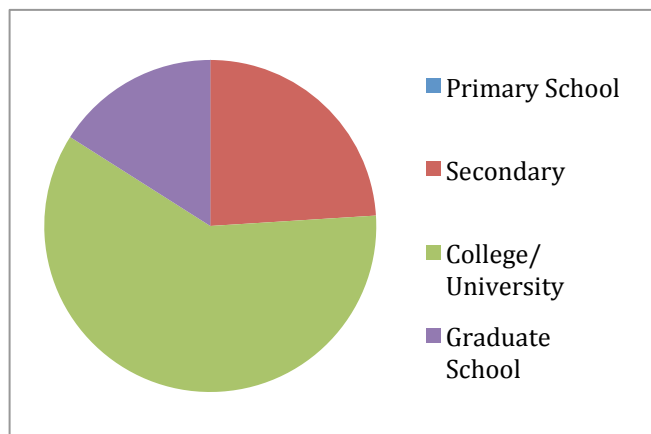


**Figure 2 Highest level of education completed**

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**Box 2 Mismatch education and employment**
''Because the country doesn't focus on diversification in business sectors, this is also reflected on the educational system in the universities and schools and stuff, as their curriculum hasn't diversified either.

So it is still basic, you're a doctor, lawyer or engineer, you know. They've recently added environmental and international development programmes, which are still pretty basic. But then with finding a job and stuff, there is hardly anything different than the traditional sectors to do.

So what happens is if you decide to do something different you either don't get a job and get frustrated so you get into a career that you don't want, or you migrate. People get trapped in the system. So what you find now is a lot of young people go into jobs or sectors they didn't even went to school for'' (*Sustainable Development Consultant*).

*C) The digital divide T&T*

Nowadays, the use of smartphones is normalized into daily life that it is difficult to imagine a life without it. The digital divide can be describes as the gap separating those who have computers and access to Internet, from those who don't (Henry, 2011). A worldwide trend has emerged of people owning a mobile phone and/or a computer for personal use. Besides, personal use, the adoption of computer and Internet technology can also be used for business purposes. This adaptation of new technologies can enhance the growth prospects for Caribbean countries and thereby have a significant impact on the reduction of poverty of the region (Henry, 2011). In 2017 in Trinidad and Tobago, there were 148.3 mobile phone subscriptions per 100 people, and only 18.8 fixed telephone subscriptions per 100 people (World Bank 5.11). As a result of this high number of mobile phone subscriptions, the base assumption was made that everyone had access to a mobile phone (Digital Divide Survey, 2013). More specifically, T&T had a smartphone usage 76.83% already in 2013. Smartphones are the most popular device from which people accessed the Internet (45.5%) followed by

laptops (16.5%) (CMB). In 2017, 73% of people were using the Internet in Trinidad and Tobago, which is high compared to the average of Latin America and the Caribbean (57.4) (World Bank). The survey found out that the majority of entrepreneurs use their smartphone to access social media, followed by their laptop and a minority uses their personal computer (figure 3).
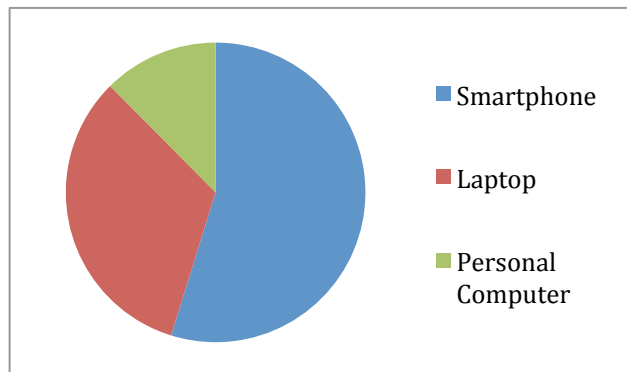
**Figure 3 Devices**

According to the Digital Divide Survey of 2013 in Trinidad and Tobago, those who had mobile phones did not always know, or were not always familiar with how to use the technology. The technological literacy, the ability of an individual to utilize a given technology, is not always equal with mobile phone access. The adult literacy is defined as the percentage of the population age 15 and above who can, with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life. This number is 99% in Trinidad and Tobago. This means that the digital divide is almost non-existent in the country as many people have access to and understanding of digital tools.

T&T aims to be not just an information economy, but a knowledge society. The government has embarked on programs to develop electronic-commerce as a vehicle of business expansion. Computers and free internet access in all schools is already a reality (Henry, 2011).

*Social media usage*

Social media networking, in the form of staying connected with friends, family by using social media platforms, is the most popular online activity followed by Internet searches and checking e-mail. In Trinidad and Tobago, there are 810 thousand active social media users, which is 59% of the total population (DataReportal, 2019). The most visited social media site is Facebook that has 740 thousand users in total, with 52% females that are also more active on this platform than males, followed by Instagram that has 400 thousand users with 53% of female users (DataReportal, 2019). This illustrates that Facebook and Instagram are the two largest social media platforms for social networking in Trinidad and Tobago, with a slight majority of female users. DataReportal also demonstrated that there is a decrease of Facebook users (-1.3%) and an increase in Instagram users (+2,6%) per month in T&T.

**Box 3 Personal experience social media usage Trinidad & Tobago**

''What I noticed is that a lot of small entrepreneurs can't afford the traditional marketing tools like newspapers, TV ads and stuff, so people will lean in towards using FB and IG to try to grow their businesses. And a lot of people now realize the benefits of social media so businesses that wouldn't even have thought about it, like banks or construction companies, now realize the power of social media. They understand the significance that relationship-building and the power of controlling the narrative of the business has on getting their business out there'' (*Online Marketing Consultant*).

*Conclusion*

The country's demographics are equally divided between males and females, however the labour force participation of women is not. Which is remarkable, concerning that their education level is often higher than males, which might play a role in the motivations of

women to start their own business. The entrepreneurial environment in Trinidad ranks just below world average and the same goes for female entrepreneurship within the country. The country is very much involved in this contemporary use of new technologies where 59% of the population is active on social media. As a result, the use of digital and social media might also lead to new (online) opportunities for people and businesses. Therefore, it is interesting to research the level of female entrepreneurship, as they are higher educated but not equally represented in the labour force, and the impact of these new communication tools, as Trinidadians are technologically evolved and highly involved in social media.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will focus on the research design and methods used in this study. First, the research objective and questions will be presented, followed by the operationalization of the main concepts used, which are eventually combined in the conceptual model. Then, the methods of research will be elaborated on, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods. And lastly, an ethical review and limitations of the research are given.

*3.1 RQ and objectives*

This research aims to explore the relationship between home-based businesses of female entrepreneurs in T&T and their use of social media to achieve success. This research is designed to answer the following question:

> *What is the impact of social media on the success of home-based businesses*
> *of female entrepreneurs in Trinidad and Tobago?*

The first sub-question is based on micro-level factors of the female entrepreneurs themselves. Here the aim is to provide background information of how individual factors can play a role in creating perceptions of success for one's business.

1. What individual factors of female entrepreneurs contribute to their perception of success?

The second sub-question is based on the meso-level analysis including the role of society and its effects on female entrepreneurs and their businesses. Here the aim is to discover what role society plays in the business environment for female entrepreneurs and to find out how social media can contribute to brining success.

2. In what way do societal factors in Trinidad and Tobago contribute to business purposes?

The third sub-question is based on macro-level factors focusing on the online means of doing business. Here the aim is to understand how female entrepreneurs perceive the use of social media platforms for their HBBs and what role these play in getting success.

3. How do social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, impact business purposes?

## 3.2 Operationalization of main concepts

| Social media | This research will only look at the effects and usage of Facebook and instagram, as these are the two largest social media platforms used in Trinidad and Tobago. |
|---|---|
| Level of success | The perception of business success differ per individual. Chapter 4 will categorize the perceptions of success of female entrepreneurs in Trinidad and Tobago, as derived from the in-depth interviews. These are divided in individual, social and economic factors of success. |
| Home-based business | These are businesses that are conducted from home. The majority of respondents of this research have an online HBB. |
| Craft sector | The majority of the respondents are present in the craft sector, including businesses such as food, jewellery, candle-making, cosmetics, body and soaps, fashion, stationary, and art. |
| S-commerce | The usage of social media platforms, and its features of interaction, communication and relationship-building, that influences making purchases and/or purchase decisions. |

**Table 3 Operationalization of main concepts**

## 3.3 Conceptual model

The conceptual model (figure 4) is based on the research of Jamali (2009) who emphasizes the importance of a multi-level analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of female entrepreneurship (Box 4). She argues that individual orientations are enmeshed and moulded by economic, legal, normative and societal environments that are also country-specific. And by including a micro-, meso-, and macro-level perspectives, this research is able to explore the different factors affecting the success of small businesses of women entrepreneurs in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Box 4. Multi-level research**

New millennium studies on women empowerment has shifted from purely descriptive explorations towards a clear effort to embed research in highly informed frameworks where the complexity of the female entrepreneurship experience is highlighted in particular contexts. Also, where a country's economic, socio-cultural and legal environment in combination with micro levels of entrepreneurship, as well as within the contours of a woman's life and overall experiences including societal norms and expectations is illustrated (Henry et al, 2015; Jamali, 2009). This highlights the usefulness of a multi level research design in the study of entrepreneurship
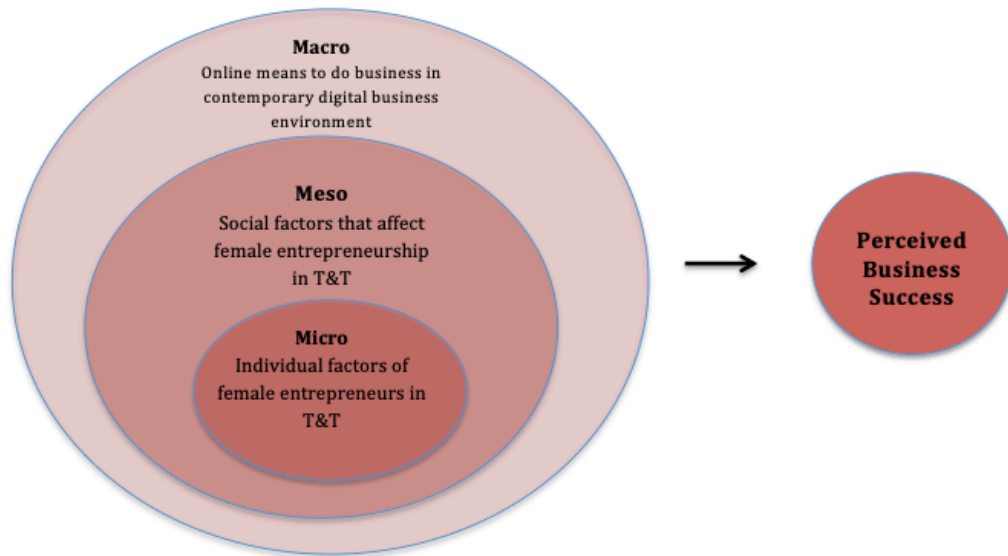
**Figure 4 Multi-level analysis of female entrepreneurship and the factors impacting their business success**

### 3.4 *Host organization: YBTT*

Youth Business Trinidad and Tobago is a NGO focused empowering young entrepreneurs to build profitable and sustainable businesses. The organization was launched in 2001 and is an accredited member of Youth Business International (YBI), an international network of youth business programs operating in over 45 countries. Their core function is to assist young persons within the age group of 18-35, who would not otherwise have the opportunity to fulfil their ambition and contribute to the community, through the medium of self-employment and development of their self-confidence. They work on this by using a four-pronged approach: firstly, by providing business start-up capital in the form of loans at low interest rates, this is a valuable resource for young entrepreneurs who generally do not own property. Secondly, by assigning experienced business mentors to the young entrepreneurs to provide guidance and support needed to address challenges encountered in managing their businesses. Thirdly, training or providing opportunities for young entrepreneurs in the skills they need to successfully manage their business, such as life skills, financial management and business planning. And lastly, organizing networking events to give them the opportunity to share experiences and exchange ideas. With their work they want to play a leadership role in developing a culture of entrepreneurship among young people in

establishing sustainable businesses in Trinidad and Tobago. YBTT has a strong online presence itself, including a well-coordinated website as well as an active Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn page where they regularly post new information and updates.

*3.5 Research methods*
This research is conducted through fieldwork over a period from February till May 2019. The research location is the whole island of Trinidad, but for logistical reasons I was located in Chaguanas, in the same area as the host organization Youth Business T&T.

The International Labour Organization mentioned on their website that they work towards the creation of sustainable, decent jobs in all types of enterprises with particular focus on micro- and small enterprises, in self-employment and in the informal economy since this is where most women and men earn their living (International Labour Organization). The focus of this research on will be on the informal economy, specifically on home-based businesses of female entrepreneurs in Trinidad & Tobago.

This research is looking at the impact of social media, therefore the research population consists of female entrepreneurs that have an online home-based business on this island who have an active social media presence. For this, the strategy of random sampling was used, where everyone had an equal chance of being included in this research. However, because it is difficult to estimate the number of female entrepreneurs that are active online using social media platform(s), as this is the research population this study is focusing on, the sample can't be considered purely random. The aim is to stratify the sample broadly across location, age, and ethnicity.

Moreover, this research consists of female participants only, as Henry et al. (2015) argue that there is a need for epistemological research and narratives of female entrepreneurs as this research will lead to ''a better understanding of how women 'do business' through studying women in their own right rather than through constant comparisons of their business activities with those men'' (Daily, Certo and Dalton, 1999; Morris, 2002; Winn, 2004 as cited in McGowan et al, 2012).

This study is based on both qualitative and quantitative methods. Brush and Cooper (1992) encourage the use of diverse approaches, in isolation or as a part of a mixed methods approach, as it may offer greater potential to capture the subtleties and nuances which may be important in distinguishing characteristics of the female approach to entrepreneurship,

and where qualitative case studies, narratives or interpretivist studies will help to shed light on the actions and efforts in entrepreneurship unique to women, will give voice to actual experiences of women entrepreneurs, and at the same time, the availability of large data sets make it possible to understand different groups of women (Brush and Cooper 2012; McGowan et al, 2012).

The primary research methods used to answer the research questions are interviews, surveys, social medial analyses (Facebook and Instagram), as well as the use of secondary data.

**Survey**

To uncover patterns of entrepreneurship and the use of digital media over time and across societal groups, this study started with a survey. Respondents were recruited and selected through social media itself to prevent bias (online sampling method). In total, 142 respondents filled in the survey. All the respondents are female entrepreneurs located in Trinidad and Tobago. The large majority of respondents are between 25-34 years old (58%) and 63% of them are unmarried.

The majority of their businesses are relatively young, equally younger than 1 year old and between 1-2 years old (see figure 5). In 72% of the cases these female entrepreneurs are self-employed with a home-based business (76%). And for 74% their business is a secondary source of income,
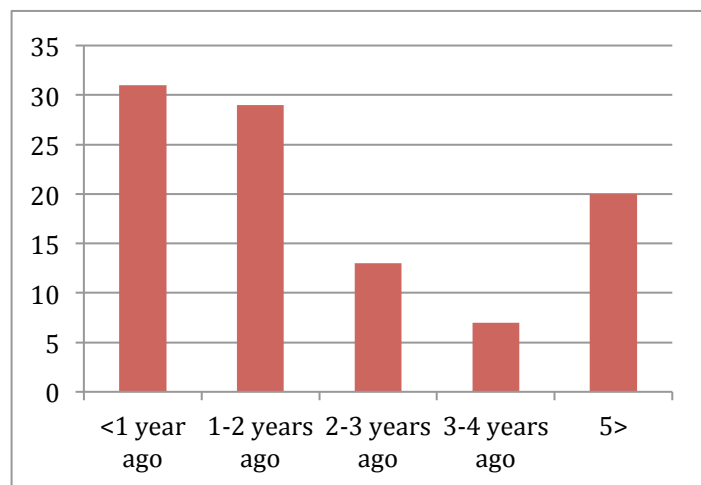
**Figure 5 Business age**

meaning that their business is a side-business in the family income. A slight majority (51%) has any other sources of income next to their business. And lastly, these businesses are categorized in many different sectors, where '*fashion, beauty and retail*' is the largest category (32%) see annex 2. The survey consisted of 42 questions that differ in nature, such as yes/no questions, only 1 answer possible questions, multiple answer questions, on a scale from 1 (agree) to 5 (disagree), and one open question. Furthermore the questions were categorized in five different parts; *motivations, domestic responsibilities,*

*social media marketing, social media communication and business environment in Trinidad.*
These questions can be found in annex 3.

The survey was shared and promoted on the Facebook page of YBTT, as they already have a network of entrepreneurs and therefore get a bigger reach (figure 6). As mentioned in chapter 2, Facebook is also the main social media platform used by entrepreneurs in T&T. They promoted this survey in in the period from March 26th till April 26th. Besides my personal social media channels, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, and the Facebook page of YBTT, the survey was also promoted in several Facebook groups focused on (female) entrepreneurship in Trinidad & Tobago (figure 7). In total, the survey was shared in five different groups: Entrepreneurship & Networking, Trinidad & Tobago, Expats in Trinidad & Tobago, Businesstt, and lastly Successful mom entrepreneur network.
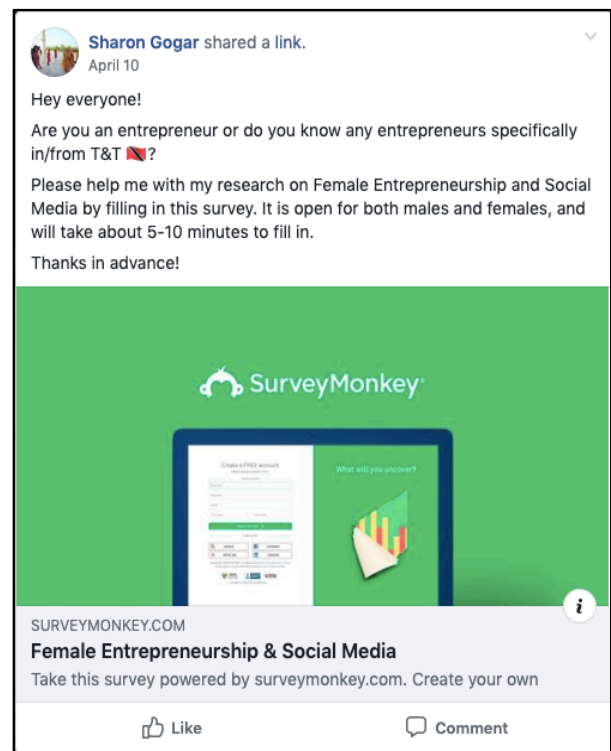


**Figure 6 Survey shared by YBTT**

**Figure 7 Survey shared by researcher**

**In-depth interviews**

Interviews are needed to gain a more in-depth understanding of the different aspirations, opinions and usage of social media. Here again, the questions were divided in five different sections, which can be found in annex 4. In total, 21 participants were selected by opportunistic and snowball sampling, as well as online recruitment.

Using the opportunistic sampling method, most of the participants were recruited in-person at different markets across the island that are organized ''to provide an avenue for small entrepreneurs, local artisans, and craft makers to promote and sell their goods and services and to empower entrepreneurs through a variety of activities and initiatives'' (SAPA; Things TT). In general, these markets were focused on crafts including businesses such as food and beverages, jewellery, clothing, make-up, art, soaps, and candles. This sector is traditionally often associated with females. In total, four different markets were visited to recruit participants for this study, organized by South Market, Things TT, UpMarket and Crafters Collective (annex 5). These markets were promoted on Facebook during the fieldwork period, and therefore, social media played an important role in this. Generally, these markets are held monthly, quarterly, and some even multiple times per month. These markets were held in different parts of the country, San Fernando, Port of Spain, and the University of the West Indies, where the opportunity existed to meet people from all over the place. Strikingly, in-person networking also provided a sense of trust among possible participants and a greater willingness to participate in this study in comparison to online recruitment.

After in-person interviewing, the snowball method was used where participants recommended other female entrepreneurs they knew and who were relevant for this research. And by using this method, female entrepreneurs outside the marketplace were recruited who were active in different sectors such as consultancy, media and business. However, the majority of the participants are active in the craft sector.

The participants were ranging from different ages and ethnicities, and living in different parts of the country. The majority of them had a business in the craft sector, including jewellery-making, art, cosmetics, food, bath and body, candle-making, and stationary. Only two participants had their own consultancy businesses, one in sustainability and the other one in digital marketing. These participants provided relevant information

about the general business environment, as well as the digital business environment in Trinidad and Tobago (see annex 6).

Only 2 participants have a rented space for their business, the remaining 19 female entrepreneurs have a home-based business. For a slight majority (12 participants) their business is their full-time occupation, which means that 9 participants combine their side-business with a professional job.

**Secondary data**

Next to the literature on female entrepreneurship, s-commerce and home-based businesses, there exists some articles with case studies in the Global South but not specifically the Caribbean or even Trinidad and Tobago. The Alma Jordan library at the campus of UWI had some literatures that were relevant for this research. Moreover, Dr. Esnard, a professor at UWI who wrote many articles on female entrepreneurship in the Caribbean and specifically in Trinidad and Tobago was consulted. Her data is also relevant and will lead to a stronger view of the Trinidadian entrepreneurial environment for women.

**Social media analysis**

The participants' social media pages (Facebook and Instagram) are analysed to uncover their online behaviour, their online persona and their online strategy. This will be presented in the form of screenshots to illustrate arguments being made. These will be done anonymously to guarantee anonymity of the participants. Parts of this social media analysis will be used, primarily, in the empirical chapters of this study.

*3.6 Ethical review*

Before the start of this research an ethical review has been made to be aware of the possible risks for the participants, to minimize these, and to understand the positionality as a researcher. This ethical review can be found in annex 7.

*3.7 Limitations of research*

**Data gap**

Since this research is based on female entrepreneurship, some academic articles use statistical data that is not always divided by gender. However in this case, this gender

division is really important, which means that not every source is useful as it might over-generalize my target population. This also goes for academic articles based on Latin America and the Caribbean, as some articles don't even include data on T&T, and therefore is not relevant for this research. It is difficult to make generalized statements from data about LAC, as the region consists of many different countries, in size, history, and population.

**Difference between islands Trinidad and Tobago**

Trinidad and Tobago are one country consisting of two islands. However, both islands are completely different from each other. Trinidad is the main island with 1.2 million inhabitants and Tobago is smaller island with 60.000 inhabitants. Literature on this country speak about Trinidad and Tobago in general, however, the two islands completely differ from each other. In terms of entrepreneurship, one participant from Tobago mentioned that people from the mainland get more opportunities provided by the government and that people from Tobago have a slight disadvantage. This raised the awareness that for some topics it is difficult to make general statements about the inhabitants of the two islands.

*Conclusion*

The following chapters will provide an empirical analysis on female entrepreneurship and the impact of social media for business purposes. The first empirical chapter will be focused on the individual factors of female entrepreneurship, the following chapter will discuss the societal factors influencing female entrepreneurship, and the last chapter will cover the usage of social media platforms, as Facebook and Instagram, for business purposes.

# Chapter 4: Personal factors female entrepreneurs

This chapter aims to describe the micro-level factors of female entrepreneurs in Trinidad and Tobago that impact their perception of success. It will answer the first sub-question: *What individual factors of female entrepreneurs contribute to their perception of success?* First, their main motivations of starting an online business will be introduced. Followed by an overview of their level of education and previous experiences. The influence of social media on each of these factors will be explained after each section. The chapter will use findings of the survey, added with information from in-depth interviews.

*Motivations*

In Trinidad and Tobago, the level of female entrepreneurship is influenced by many individual, socio-cultural and economic factors. Every entrepreneur has a different background, different opportunities and different reasons to start their own business. Ramkisoon-Babwah (2015) found out that the motivations of female entrepreneurs in T&T to engage in entrepreneurial activities are associated with the so-called pull-factors. These are factors that draw people to start a business such as seeing opportunities for independence, pursuit of challenge, initiative and creativity (Kirkwood, 2009). According to the survey among 142 female entrepreneurs, it became evident that these factors are indeed the main reasons for entrepreneurship in the craft sector in T&T.
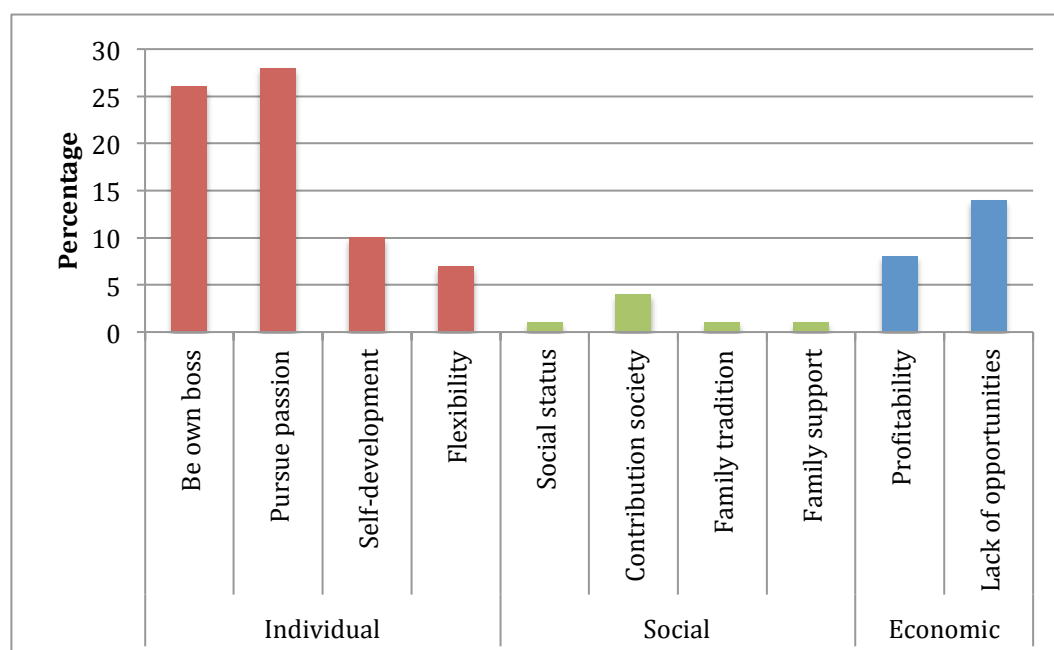


**Figure 8 Motivations for entrepreneurship**

The two reasons that stood out in the survey were the aspiration of females to *pursue their passion* (27%) and to *be their own boss* (25%) (figure 8). The *lack of opportunities* (14%), as the only push factor, is also an important motivation that reflects the contemporary employment environment of T&T. These three motivations will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

*Pursue passion*

Biraglia and Kadile (2017) found out that entrepreneurial passion is an important and significant driver to intend to start a business. This is in accordance with the survey as well as with participants in the candle-making business, food, cosmetics and jewellery who mentioned that their passion played an important role in starting their business. For some the need for a creative outlet to pursue their passion became an opportunity to start a business in the craft sector. With a strong passion, these entrepreneurs were able to pursue their hobby that and later on grew into an actual business opportunity: *''I've always been fascinated with glass, so why not turn something I enjoy into something I can make money from'' (Jewellery maker).* Entrepreneurship opens doors for all types of businesses and provides the opportunity for people to turn their passion into a hobby, and their hobby into a business.

> **Box 5. Personal story: from passion to hobby to business**
> Abbey* is an electrical engineer who worked for 20 years in the manufacturing sector in Trinidad. However, when her two kids were small and their demand for her attention became wider, decisions had to be made. Together with her husband she decided that the best option was for her to stay home and to take care of the children. She quit her job and became stay at home mom. Candles are something that she absolutely loves and was passionate about, and would use them in her house all day. She was always interested in making them. And when her children grew up she found herself to have more free time. That is when she decided to take a class to learn how to make them. *''I love the candles and I love to make them, so I thought to myself, I don't see why I can bring the joy to other people?''.* Candle making became her new hobby. And it wasn't until she went to craft markets that inspired her to start her own business. *''Last year I started to go from a hobby to making and selling them''.*

      *pseudonym used for anonymity

There are many different reasons of establishing an online business in the craft sector, where social media is seen as an important tool for pursuing one's passion. The most

important reason for using social media for business purposes is because it is seen as *'an advertising tool''* (Soap maker) and a *''great tool to get your business out there* (Jewellery maker). Social media, specifically Facebook and Instagram, provide a platform to market and promote one's hand-made products, as well as create visibility for one's brand. These platforms not only provide the opportunity to display one's own authentic works, yet also from other vendors. Here, it can also be used as a *''source of inspiration''* (Soap maker), where people with the same interests can benefit from each other.

However, one downside of this online visibility is that everyone can see your content and information, also people with ulterior motives. Participants have mentioned examples of stalking, scamming, hacking, and online harassment, resulting in trust and privacy concerns. These are not the major challenges of social media, but are serious concerns and therefore are noteworthy to mention.

*Be own boss*

The second main reason for entrepreneurship was, according to the survey, to be your own boss. Women often experience a certain level of gender inequality in traditional workplaces, such as a lack of paid maternity leave, inadequate time off, little flexibility and unequal pay (Barrett and Davidson, 2006 as cited in Tran, 2014). These workplaces are not benefitting them in the same way as they do with male employees. For this reason, women are pushed out of the traditional workplace and more motivated to start their own business. One participant mentioned to work for a large tax company, yet she was treated very badly so she decided to leave. Also individual motives about working in traditional workplaces play a role in pursuing entrepreneurship. One participant mentioned that she became too comfortable with her position and felt that *''being stuck in a position is scarier to me than starting my own business'' (Business consultant).*

*Lack of opportunities*

The third main factor was the lack of opportunities in the business environment in T&T. Younger entrepreneurs between 18-24 years, who were still in school or just graduated and in the position of applying for corporate jobs, often mentioned this issue. Applying for jobs can take years and *''here it works with connections when getting a job, so you need to do something in the meantime (Stationary).* This gap of temporary unemployment might inspire

people to just start their own business, as they need to occupy themselves as well as to meet their financial needs, *"I know some people who have been unemployed for a while and then thought hmm let me turn my hobby into a business" (Stationary creator)*.

Those people who don't get the chance to build up experience at a traditional job, have to work with the knowledge and skills they already have. As a result of this people end up working in sectors that are available and familiar to them.

*"In a lot of cases, especially for women when they were laid off by their partners, they had no other choice, so either they could cook very well or they know how to make certain products so they end up in certain works like that".*

Following this argument, certain women will stay in 'traditional' sectors associated to female type of work, such as food, care giving and crafts. There are two perspectives of this issue; one might assume that this is a negative outlook for female entrepreneurs who keep getting stuck in the same sectors that will only enforce stereotypes and expectations of female roles. However, one might also perceive this as an opportunity for female entrepreneurs to make a business out of their hobby, where they are able to combine their interests with the skills they already gained from doing domestic work and create a business out of it.

Participants and respondents in this research see their business in different ways, some female entrepreneurs see it as their hobby, whereas others perceive it as their fulltime job and primary means of getting an income. Their social media behaviour also differs in this; entrepreneurs who perceive their business as a hobby, didn't immediately start to use social media for their business purposes (39%), until after they became more serious about it. As Mullins (1996) explains that we may be influenced by our expectations so that we 'see' what we expect to see; a female entrepreneur who knows she is less committed to business would not expect much from her business (Ehigie and Umoren, 2003).

*Education and experience*

Having the right set of knowledge and skills figures an important aspect of starting a business, therefore, it is important to illustrate the level of education and experience of the participants. As mentioned in chapter 2, the majority of female entrepreneurs have

completed their College or University degree, which links with Pounder (2015) who found out that on average women in T&T are higher educated than men, and not specifically in these traditional sectors. Also, academic backgrounds in the non-traditional sectors, such as chemistry, in electrical engineering, and in information technology, were mentioned. However, very few mentioned to have previous education or training in entrepreneurship and social media marketing. Figure 9 displays that in both cases the majority of female entrepreneurs had no previous experiences with entrepreneurship (58%) and with social media marketing (79%).
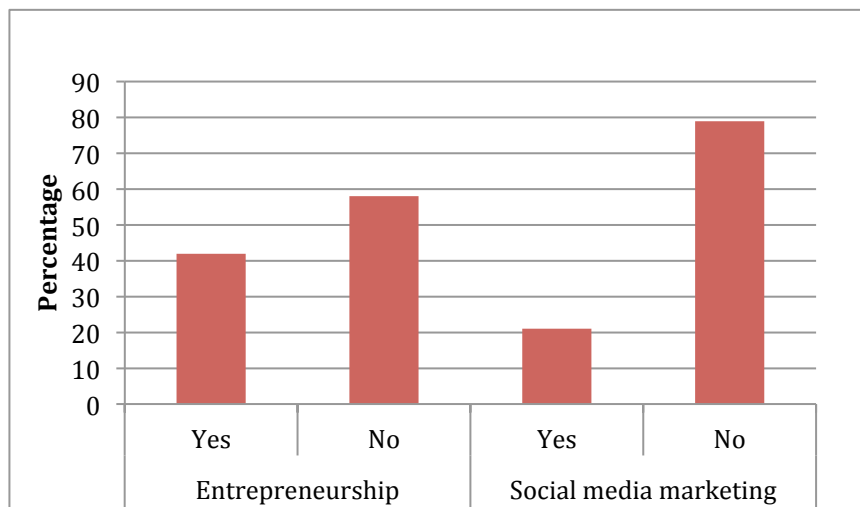


**Figure 9 Previous experiences in entrepreneurship - social media marketing**

However this does not mean that these women are starting their business out of the blue. For many of them, the experience gained through education provides them with a certain set of skills that can assist them in starting and managing their own business. An academic background can influence the position of an entrepreneur in the market as for instance, *''a background in chemistry gives me a step ahead in the soap making business'' (Soap maker).* This gives her a starting advantage over other entrepreneurs in this sector, as she does not have to follow a course or workshop to gain knowledge about these products. Another example is that one's academic background can help them manage their business as one participant mentioned that ''my *background in accounting did not motivate me to start a business, but it did assist in financial planning and managing'' (Artisian).*

Besides academic skills, social media is also used to educating these female entrepreneurs. Youtube is often mentioned as an important platform where videos and tutorials are used for learning new skills related to making new products that can be sold. In this case, social media is used as an educational tool for entrepreneurs. However, also the other way around is considered helpful, when social media can be used to educate the audience and share knowledge with them. As one female entrepreneur mentioned *"I like paper beading and notice that people are unaware that this is done, […] so I want to spread the awareness to others. My goal is to educate and uplift people about recycling" (Jewellery maker).* McClelland et al. (2005) found out that women are increasingly becoming more motivated by the social contribution that their business can make to society (Alam et al, 2011).

Besides education, previous work experience can also play a role in managing one's own business, *"I also worked as a cashier myself so I have experience with customers, and selling and promoting items, so it is quite easy for me to pick up here" (Jewellery maker).* Adding to this, experiences gained through extra-curricular activities, such as photography and blogging are also relevant in starting and managing an online business.

In the informal sector in T&T, education is not rewarded the same as a persons working experience (Sookram and Watson). Other women emphasized that starting an online business provided them the opportunity to combine several different skills they have gained. One woman mentioned that as a recent Master's graduate in entrepreneurship and self-taught in digital marketing, in times of unemployment, she *"decided to combine everything I know and give myself and other people an employment opportunity" (Christy).* In her business she was able to combine previous academic and extra-curricular skills into her business. Another woman mentioned that her mom *"has entrepreneurial experience and I have two certificates in social media" (Food preparer).* By establishing her online business she and her mom are able to combine their skills in both entrepreneurship and digital marketing for their HBB. The ability to combine skills is important and very useful *"otherwise you're specialized in just one thing making you disadvantaged"* in todays world with unlimited online opportunities for businesses *(Selena).*

> **Box 6: Personal story: combining skills and knowledge for business purposes**
> Sade is a highly motivated and versatile woman who has her own home-based bakery. She now works as an office clerk that helps her financially. She has academic knowledge in working as a labtech, did a major in Spanish and a minor in gender studies. Next to school and work, she is involved in photography specialized in food which she combines with blogging as well. Her business in food combines her academic knowledge of the effects of food, her skills in food photography, as well as her interest in blogging about food. Her Instagram page facilitates the promotion of her business and the visualization of her products.

However, the majority of female entrepreneurs lack previous social media skills for business purposes, as displayed in figure 8. The main reason these women started their online business by using social media was mainly because they already had a personal page and decided to make a business page as well. But because of a lack of knowledge they often did not fully understand how to work with it.

Many did understood and acknowledged the importance of an online presence in today's world, as almost everyone has a social media presence nowadays which makes it *''absolutely necessary to have it especially when you look at small businesses and there is so much competition, and when people don't see it on their phones then you wont get their interests'' (Jewellery maker).* Also, people reach out faster on social media than other forms of communication. For instance, one participant mentioned that at events, *''people often ask for your Facebook or Instagram, and if the world is at your fingertips with technology then to be a part of that world, one has to embrace technology''.* This also weights in on the decision to start an online business, however some do feel that *''there is a lot of pressure to be on social media'',* and see it less as a choice to use it for business purposes.

*Success*

The motivations to start a business are, besides level of education and previous experiences, linked to the entrepreneurs' perception of success. Annex 8 highlights the main impressions of what 21 female entrepreneurs in Trinidad and Tobago perceive as success for their business. Here, two factors are non-financial aspirations for success can be linked to the two pull motivations of entrepreneurship, where women get the opportunity to start a business. In contrast, one success factor is based on financial goals, which can be linked to the one push motivation of entrepreneurship where it is necessary for women to start a business.

*Conclusion*

Many female entrepreneurs started their business out of a hobby, where social media played a role in developing it into a business opportunity. Their main motivations of pursuing their passion and being their own boss derive from the so-called pull-factors, meaning that these women have the opportunity to establish their online business, rather than pursuing a career of self-employment out of necessity.

Others emphasized the lack of opportunities in the county, and a need for a secondary income. Their businesses often did not start out of a hobby, but rather a combination of the skills as a result of their education and work/extra-curricular experiences. Social media played a role in expanding one's knowledge. They often pursue a fulltime business rather than a hobby or side-business.

The success-factors of female entrepreneurs are linked to their motivations to start a business. The motivations of female entrepreneurs to start a business out of opportunity, in many cases, see their success in non-financial terms. And the female entrepreneurs whose motivation to start a business derives from a lack of opportunities, often see financial benefits as their success.

# Chapter 5: Societal factors of Trinidad and Tobago

This section aims to describe the meso-level factors of female entrepreneurship in Trinidad and Tobago that contribute to bringing success. It will answer the second sub-question: *In what way do societal factors in Trinidad and Tobago contribute to bring success for female entrepreneurs?* First, the level of institutional support will be analysed, followed by the level of social support. Then social expectations and roles of females in business will be analysed. The influence of social media on each of these sectors will be explained after each section. This chapter will use findings of the survey, added with information form in-depth interviews.

*Institutional support*

To understand the entrepreneurial environment in Trinidad and Tobago and its effects on female entrepreneurs, it is important to discover the role of the government in facilitating efforts to start up and maintaining a business. According to the survey, the majority of respondents (32%) agreed that it is easy to start a business on the island (figure 10).



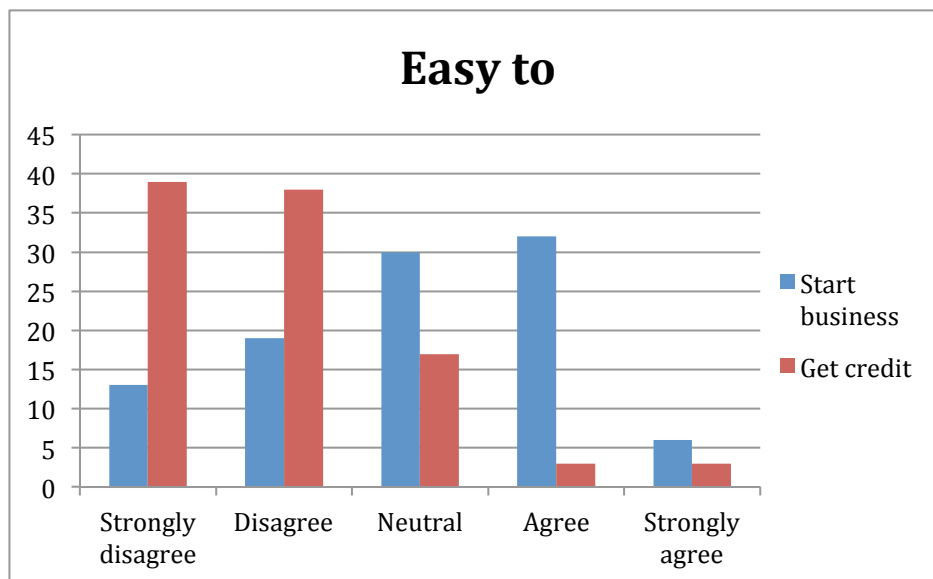**Figure 20 Easy to start a business – to get credit**

However, one of the participants mentioned that it is indeed easy to start a business, but only 'if *you already have capital'*. This lack of starting capital is in many cases the main challenge that home-based business starters have see figure 11. Adding to this, figure 10 displays that 77% have a negative opinion regarding the ease of getting credit for their

businesses. For home-based businesses, banks will check your accounts to see the revenue and activity of your business, yet this is incredibly difficult to prove if you just started a business or having a side-business at home. As mentioned in chapter 4, some businesses started out as a hobby and don't have much revenue and/or activity and for others this is also not
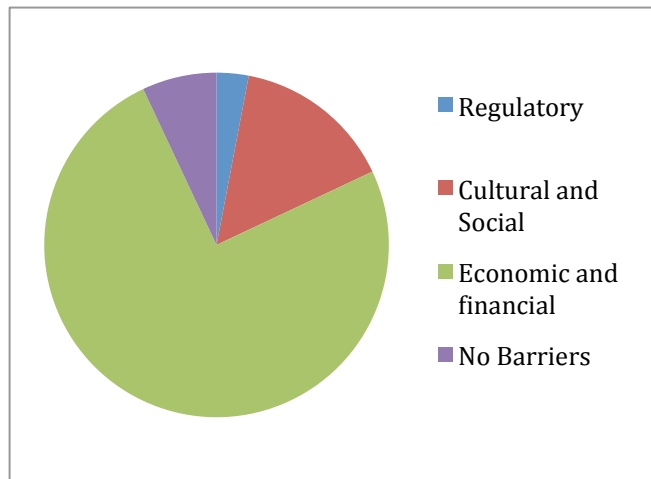


**Figure 11 Barriers of entrepreneurship**

even their end goal. There are many hoops in the banking system and home-based business owners don't get the feeling that the banking system support small businesses. That is why many home-based business owners don't rely on the bank for getting their credit.

Registering a business is relatively easy however the biggest challenge of home-based businesses, besides getting credit, lies in finding information about how to register a business. *''You know how other countries have government portals where you can find a lot of information, but we don't have that here'' (Environmental consultant)*. Governmental websites do have information on it, however these are often out-dated and not relevant for contemporary businesses, and not fitting to contemporary governmental guidelines. When looking for information online or by calling, the information is often contradicting to what is actually needed, creating *''many hoops''* in the system when starting a business.

Contrary to challenges of starting a business in Trinidad and Tobago, lies the establishment of an online business. This is relatively easy because there aren't many requirements, in terms of registration or starting capital. Figure 12 shows that the majority (34%) disagrees that it is easy to start a business without social media, meaning that social media is an important asset when starting a business. Staring a business comes with many responsibilities including marketing,
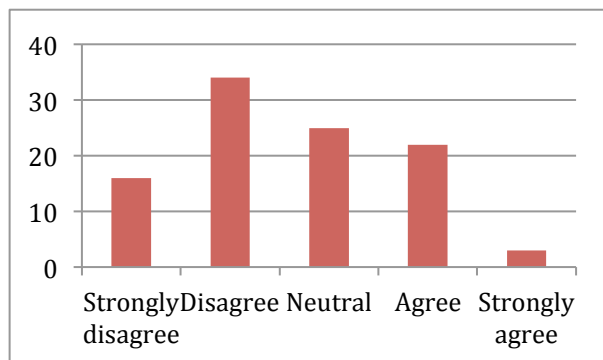


**Figure 12 Easy to start without social media**

networking, and finance. Having an online business is a cost-effective method for promotion and networking. And as opposed to traditional forms of media, *"social media is free and there are a lot of free tools to take advantage off"*. Moreover, because the business is conducted online, there is no need for a physical store where social media is *"the shelf they are looking at"*. This also contributes to limiting financial costs for entrepreneurs and increasing appeal to start on online business.

Also in technical terms, it is relatively easy to make a profile or a business page. The only things needed are some personal information, like one's name, birthdate and an e-mail. These social media platforms are also easy accessible, where the only thing needed is access to the Internet when using a laptop, or downloading the app when using a smartphone.

Next to starting a business in Trinidad, the main challenge actually lies in maintaining the business. People often underestimate the work of an entrepreneur working non-traditional hours, as well as the level of competition on the market. Many people have a passion for something or a specific set of skills that they are able to start a business with, but as mentioned in chapter 4, lack actual knowledge how to maintain and improve their business. To solve this problem, there are many instances providing support for one's business, as mentioned in chapter 2, including the Trinidadian government, universities, private entities, (craft) markets and private entrepreneurs.

One female entrepreneur mentioned to have followed a course provided by the ministry of community development. Interestingly, these government courses are about learning a skill, such as making jewellery, soap or clothes, *"but then you won't know anything about the whole concept of having a business and marketing"*. As a result of this, you will see many people in the same craft sector, especially jewellery and soaps, of people who know how to make them but still with little experience of running a business.

Another issue marks that information about these courses, trainings or workshops are *"not properly disseminated which makes it difficult to find online"*. Figure 13 also shows that people relatively have sufficient access to these trainings, however according to the majority (34%) it is not easy to find information about it. Many female entrepreneurs are also aware of the fact that when in need of support or assistance, it is important that *"one needs to know where to look for information"*, as information is not advertised and websites are often not up-to-date, especially government websites. Also, unfortunately, these courses are often too expensive for home-based entrepreneurs who are just starting their business,

resulting in people not being able to attend and therefore missing crucial knowledge that could lead to their business success.
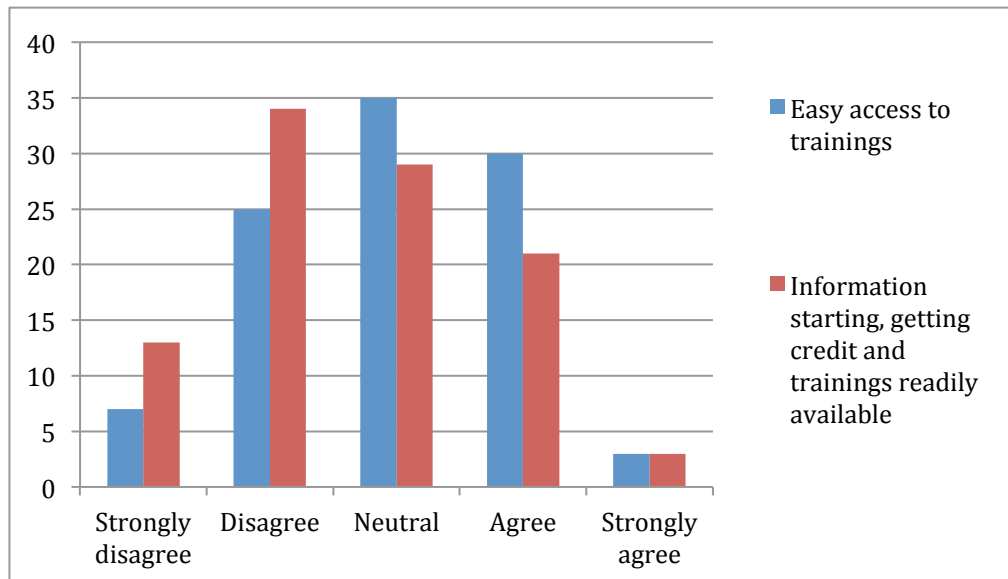


**Figure 13 Online information**

The large majority of participants are of the opinion that the government tries to promote small businesses and entrepreneurship, but not effective enough. They feel that there is no overall strategy to help and educate people into entrepreneurship. There is no *provision and incentive for entrepreneurship*, as well as an *unnecessary amount of paperwork* that doesn't make it easy to start and maintain a business.

One participant argued that the ease of starting a business really depends on the sector of the business. They sense that the government only promotes what they know and perceive as important for the county, which is their main business sector of oil and gas and the big businesses that are involved in this. This means that non-traditional sectors, such as small businesses in this case, are not specifically on the agenda of the government in terms of importance and promotion (Environmental consultant).
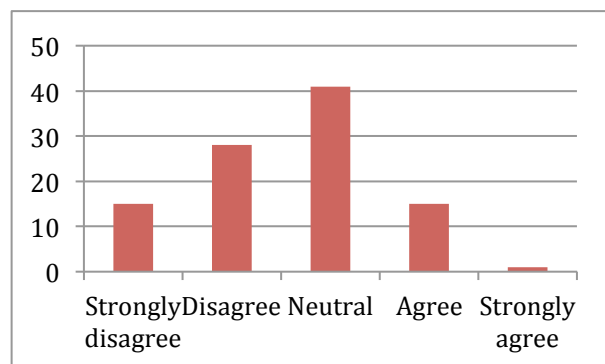


**Figure 14 Active role government**

They feel that the system doesn't support small businesses (figure 14).

Because the lack of government support, several private instances have provided the opportunity for sales and networking. For the craft sector, groups such as, ThingsTT, South Market and Up Market, organize market all around the country where micro, small and home-based business can display their works and network with customers and other vendors.

*Social support*

Besides governmental support, female entrepreneurs also emphasize the importance of having a supportive network. Figure 15 shows that the majority of respondents agree that they have had some form of support from family and friends, as well as within the household. A strong supportive system can affect the business in four different ways;
i) General support, ii) Motivational support, iii) Shared experiences, and iv) Financial support.
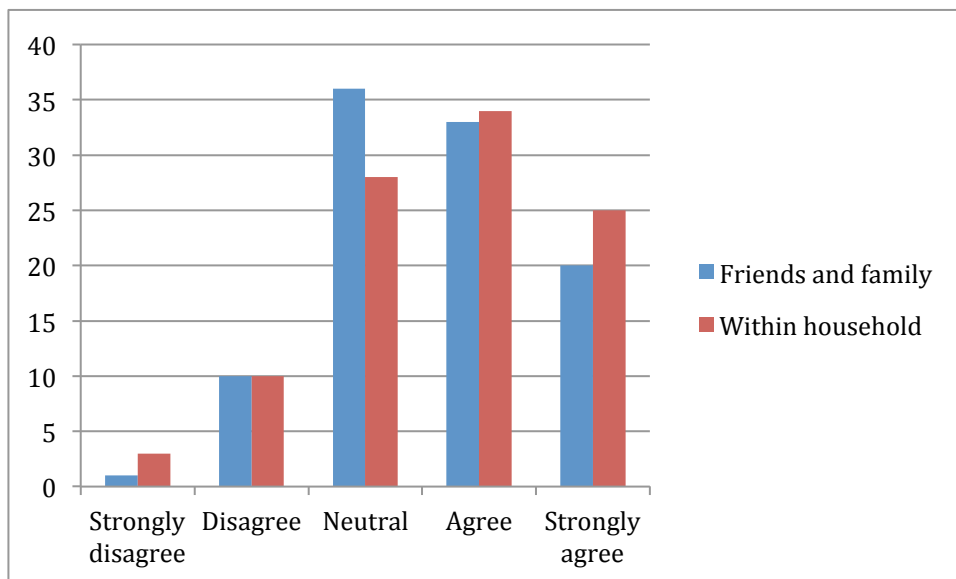


**Figure 15 Level of support**

Even the smallest actions of spouses, parents, friends and family members can have a big impact on these home-based businesses. Three participants mentioned that their business consists of a mother-daughter team, ''just like a bit of quality time together'', where business and family life are intertwined. Others mentioned little actions of their spouses as they helped them with transportation and delivery of products. Or helping at the markets where ''you really need help because it gives you the chance to talk to your customers as well'' instead of managing everything by yourself. Another interesting influence that many female entrepreneurs mentioned, is that their family and friends where their first customers

who insisted to pay for their work. They also support their businesses by spreading the word as well as online word-of-mouth in the form of liking and sharing posts.

Besides general support of the business, support from family and friends and one's household can also motivate the female entrepreneur to start, continue and succeed with her business. One participant mentioned that even though they were in a financially insecure position as her husband was the only one with a stable income, he kept motivating her to continue with her business as this was her main passion. Another participant mentioned that it was actually her family who recognized talent in her cooking skills and motivated and supported her to start her own business.

*''Many of my closest friends and family have either recently started a business or have been entrepreneurs for a number of years. Because I am surrounded by like-minded people who are on the same journey as me – people who are passionate about growing and sustaining their business – I am incredibly motivated to succeed'' (Candle-maker).*

Being surrounded by people who have experience in entrepreneurship is a valuable asset in a business environment that lacks government support for small businesses. The advice given by friends and family members might be helpful for the business and fills the gap of the lack of professional training. Besides entrepreneurial advice, friends and family members also share other set of skills and knowledge, as previously mentioned in chapter 4, many female entrepreneurs lack the knowledge of how to use social media for their business. Children often help their mothers with social media for their businesses, as they grew up with it and ''automatically understand how it works''. One participant mentioned that her husband works in photography and helps her business by making photos for her social media accounts. Another participant mentioned that she did not understand social media at all and didn't use it for her business, until other vendors at the markets she went to, explained the importance of it for business purposes nowadays. She now started her online business. This means that sharing one's experiences, knowledge and skills, even the smallest and not always most important ones, can still impact one's business in a major way.

Besides advice-giving and knowledge-sharing by family and friends, financial help is another way to fill in the gap of getting credit left by the government. As previously mentioned, small and home-based businesses have difficulties in getting funding but still need capital to start and maintain their business. Many entrepreneurs use their own savings

as starting capital. Some mention to be ''fortunate enough to have financial support from their family'', which gives them fewer issues on that field and more time and resources to spend on other parts of the business.

According to the OECD 2017 report there is long-standing evidence that women entrepreneurs tend to have entrepreneurial networks that are smaller and less diverse than male entrepreneurs, and their networks appear to have a different composition including family, friends, and educators rather than business service provides or other entrepreneurs. Many participants emphasized the importance of networking with other vendors, outside the family, friends and the household sphere. ''*The creative sector in T&T is a small community where everyone knows each other*'' (Jewellery-maker). This is beneficial for new entrepreneurs who just joined the scene as they can benefit from this already established network in their sector. Other entrepreneurs are often most supportive as they understand the challenges of starting and maintaining a business, and therefore are more willing to help others. ''*As an entrepreneur we need support from other entrepreneurs because of the customers. If they don't get what they want from me, I can recommend others for them*'' (Jewellery-maker). One participant mentioned that by doing collaborations with different vendors, she could benefit from their connection and ended up being guided into different craft markets.

However, some entrepreneurs experience working with other vendors in the same sector in less beneficial way. According to them, because the creative sector is small, people see each other as competition rather than being helpful. Even though there are different industries within the sector, ''it comes down to what people will be spending that dollar on''. Moreover, ''it is a natural thing to feel people out and to see if you have a connection with someone, and in that case, there is no issue with sharing information and resources'' but this is not the case with everyone.

*Social media*
The arrival of social media allows networking to be conducted online as well. It is seen as ''*a good tool for networking*'', ''*getting people to know the person behind the works*'', and building relations with customers. This highlights the technical aspect of what makes social media different from any other form of online commerce, which is the ability to build-relationships with other people in the form of liking, commenting and sharing information.

The majority of respondents (75%) mention to be involved in online groups, specifically Facebook, and for the largest group (48%) these were *somewhat beneficial*. Participants mentioned that these groups are useful in the sense that they provide a space to ask questions, to learn new techniques that lead to product improvement, and to share information and events. It is a place for support, advice and networking where people from all over the world can connect with each other.

Furthermore, these online groups are a great opportunity to fill in the training and information gap by the government. Especially when one has no (relevant) social support system, these online groups can be beneficial to ask other vendors for advice or support. Examples are, online seminars (webinars), Q&A's, live videos that open the opportunity for everyone to attend, events, promotion of private courses and events (annex 9).

Therefore, social media creates to opportunity to build a network of communities of people with similar interests that can support each other. Because of networks, many participants mentioned that they know more female entrepreneurs than males. One participant also mentioned that women are dominating several sectors in Trinidad and Tobago, specifically in arts & crafts, cosmetics, hair & makeup services, wedding & event coordination (Candle-maker).

On the contrary, also at the online sphere, there are people with different experiences who are guarded by networking, sharing ideas and information with others. One participant mentioned an incident where a person seemed supportive on the surface, but behind her back was stealing ideas pretending to be hers. This has led her to change her behaviour online and be more careful in collaborating with others. Another participant mentioned that the environment of online groups, might sometimes reflect real life. *''There are a lot of cliques, when they see someone else pop up in their 'street' they throw shade at them to intimidate them''* (Online marketing consultant). Meaning that some people are trying to dominate the sectors they are involved in and see competition as a thread to their business. Here they feel the need to defend their business and themselves by online intimidating others.

Another issue of competition in the online environment is that people don't respect intellectual property. One participant mentioned that someone copied everything from her page, word for word. But she didn't felt threatened by is as she is confident in herself and the relationships she has with her customers.

*"You can copy my content on Facebook but you can't copy the work I do and the relationships I have with my clients. You can't copy me"* (Online marketing consultant).

*Personal skills*

Having confidence in yourself is a necessary trait when doing business, as you need to believe in yourself and your business first. The majority of participants mentioned that their self-confidence has improved as a result of interaction with different kinds of customers and personalities, and basically taking them out of their comfort zone. Only one participant mentioned that she already had a certain level of confidence so her business didn't necessarily contribute to that. Another one mentioned that her previous work experiences, where it was necessary for her to deal with customers, have contributed to an increase in her level of confidence. On the other hand, instead of bringing confidence, entrepreneurship can also *"test your confidence and bring on anxiety when times are hard"*.

Social media platforms can contribute to increasing one's level of self-confidence, as it provides the ability for customers to give their opinion, feedback and to ask questions. One participant mentioned that when you get a lot of reactions online, it will motivate you to improve yourself. Another entrepreneur mentioned that a lot of great feedback on her products makes her feel empowered and quite humbled to hear positive things.

The downside of this is that not everyone will like one's content and/or products and therefore comments, reviews and feedback won't always be positive. As an online business owner with a public social media appearance, one has to be aware of this as well as prepared to deal with it. Besides negative comments or feedback, getting no response at all on your content is also a challenge. One participant mentioned that she felt *"anxious when no one would reply to her content"*.

Some participants mentioned that their personal skills have changed over time as a result of their own online business as it is an on-going leaning experience. Three participants considered themselves to be an introvert, meaning they try to avoid large groups of people and feeling more energized by time alone than by interacting with others. However, for entrepreneurs whose business is more than just a hobby, it is necessary to interact with customers and to give good service for the sake of their business. They have to *"be nice and open to customers as every order counts"*. Here, having a business that requires interaction with customers leads to opportunities for growth and improvement of certain personal

skills, where these three ladies now feel more comfortable interacting with customers online and are even looking forward to go to the markets.

Having a business that requires interaction also affected female entrepreneurs' speaking skills and ways of dealing with people. One participant mentioned that because her business is dependent on her networking skills, she is very aware of how to communicate with customers, also in a timely manner. The feature of social media platforms to comment under a post, creates the ability for easy and quick communication between customers and entrepreneurs. It also offers the ability to 'like' or respond to that comment, and therefore engaging with each other.

However, this form of quick communication also raises the expectation to quick replies from the business owners. One participant mentioned that Facebook gives incentives when one replies within five minutes, in the form of a badge. However, since she has a fulltime job, she is unable to respond that quickly and therefore will never receive that badge, and never receive the reputation of providing quick replies. This expectation and pressure to respond immediately is one of the negative aspects of social media, which creates this new online culture of being available at all times.

*''I am always on my phone, cause I need to check if someone has placed an order or if someone messages me. And the thing about it is that when a customer has send you a message, they want you to respond immediately. If you don't respond in a timeframe, you might loose a customer'' (Candle-maker).*

*Domestic responsibilities*

The inability to be available at all times derives from the fact that time is a major challenge when running a business. Some have fulltime job next to their busines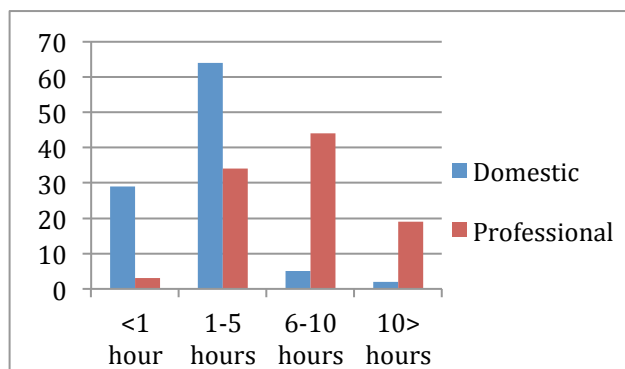s, for others, their domestic responsibilities take up the time they have left. The mentality that females are responsible for the household is also reflected in the survey, where the large majority of respondents (93%)

**Figure 16 Hours of work**

have domestic responsibilities, e.g. cooking, cleaning and/or taking care of children. Many of these women, spend around 1-5 hours on their domestic responsibilities plus adding 6-10 hours of working on their business (figure 16). Not specifically making products, but also working on labels, making pictures and social media marketing included.

A slight majority of respondents noticed that they have difficulties in balancing domestic and professional work (figure 17). With a home-based business, domestic and professional lives are more intertwined compared to having a traditional job. The majority of respondents agree with the statement that entrepreneurship contributes to balancing domestic and professional life (figure 18). Whereas, the
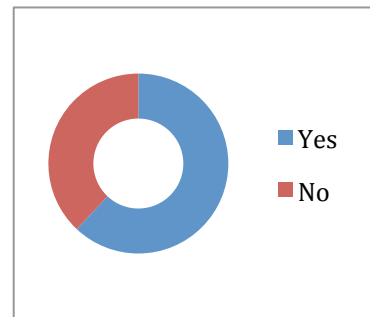


Figure 17 Difficulties balancing

majority is neutral regarding the ability of social media to balance these two lives (figure 19). This means that besides a supportive element, some people still see social media more as an extra form of labour, therefore not contributing to balancing domestic work but rather an additional task. This also relates to the lack of understanding of social media marketing, as mentioned in chapter 4, meaning that it takes more time to understand when using it for business purposes.

Having children influences the ability to balance these domains. Two female entrepreneurs stated that when their children were small, their demand of attention increased, resulting in having little time left. However, now the children are grown and not in need of time and attention, it leaves them with more free time that they can spend for personal use or on their businesses. Three female entrepreneurs have mentioned that they work in the evening, when everyone sleeps and when it is cooler to work.



Figure 18 Balancing domestic - professional work
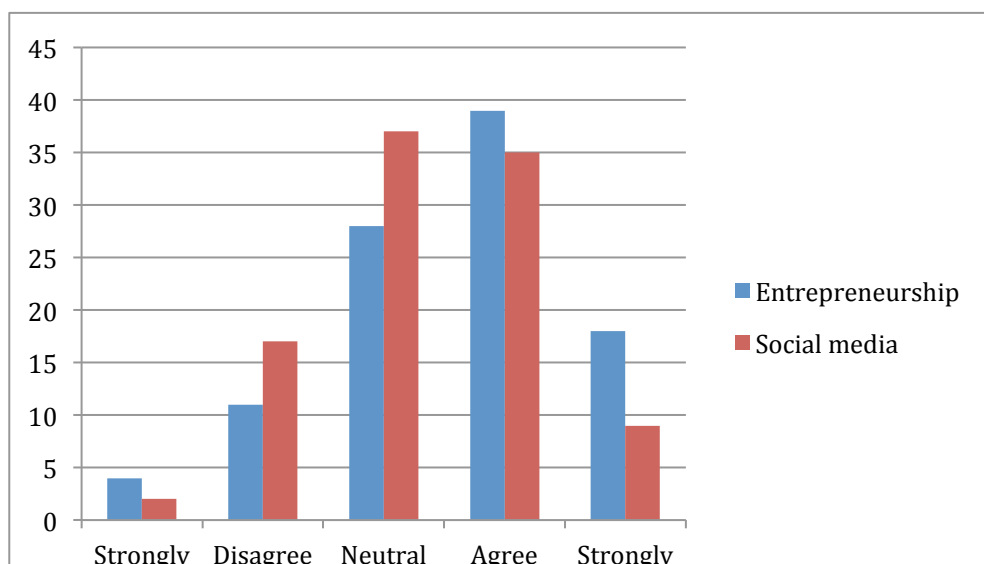
As an entrepreneur, one loses the system of having traditional working hours, which can be a benefit as well as a challenge for having an online business. The benefit of having no fixed hours is that gives you the flexibility to work outside of this specific timeframe. One is ''not cooking and cleaning all day'' and the possibility exists to

**Figure 19 Flexibility from social media**

''work on domestic issue around business orders''.  On the other hand, it increases the time spend online, and the expectation of being available at all time as mentioned before. Therefore, social media does lead to flexibility (47%), yet the downside of this is the 24/7 online availability (figure 19).

The expectations of domestic roles for females exist as a result of differences in the perception of male and female entrepreneurs. One participant mentioned that *''people overlook the fact that I run my own business, they don't see it as an actual job but more as a hobby''*. Here, women are expected to have domestic responsibilities as their first priority and their business as a side activity. Another one mentioned that at these craft markets, people didn't believe that she was the owner. Instead they assumed that she was the promo girl that was hired by the business.

These images of a woman in business stems from *''the mentality that females are the ones that stay home and look after things, which is definitely still present in Trinidad''* *(Jewellery maker).* Therefore, even though women are becoming more accepted in the business environment (figure 20), the perception that domestic responsibilities are a woman's job and where a woman owning a business does not fit this image unfortunately still exists. However, gender
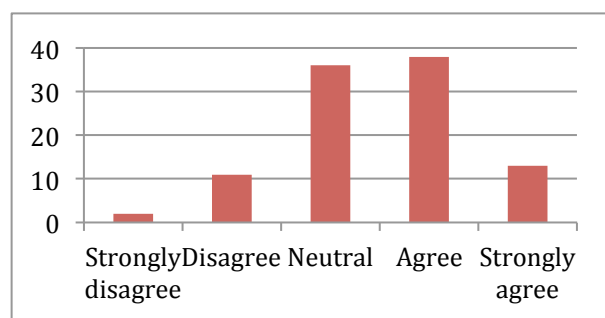
**Figure 20 Acceptance business environment - female**

equity is becoming the norm for younger generations, as *''it is opening up a bit cause millennial's are opening up of acceptance and I don't have to label myself as what is expected from a woman''* (Artist). Three participants mentioned they grew up in an equal household themselves, where tasks were equally divided and support was available, and continue this within their own families. Also, by sharing more stories on social media of what

female entrepreneurs have achieved, and what businesses they have it will change the image of what a woman is capable of and expected to be. Times are definitely changing now.

*Conclusion*

Many participants have mentioned the lack of government support for small businesses, in the forms of capital, information and trainings. There are other instances filling in this gap, yet these are often not affordable for home-based business owners. Social media can play a role in providing online groups of advice and support, creating online access to trainings, promotion of events and workshops to increase one's knowledge and skills, and a platform to ask questions.

Many female entrepreneurs have also mentioned to have a strong social support base of friends, family and within the household. These networks support the entrepreneur in many different ways, including general, motivational, financial and by sharing experiences, and are highly valuable for business success. For the entrepreneurs who don't have a social network or not as strong as they want, social media provides opportunities to network with customers as well as with other vendors. This is also an opportunity to get out of the small social network and meet new people with different visions, ideas and perspectives that can contribute to business success.

On personal level, self-confidence is a skill that is important to have when starting and maintaining a business. Some already have it, and using social media can improve it by providing the opportunity to interact with customers where they can share their experiences, reviews and feedback.

Regarding domestic responsibilities, social media also brings flexibility in running the household, yet many also see it as an extra form of labour as it is time-consuming to keep up with. And lastly, the expectation still exists that females are responsible for taking care of the household. Yet this image is changing in modern day society. Social media can play a role in displaying an image of what women are achieving, creating role models for girls to see.

# Chapter 6: Social media usage for online businesses

This chapter aims to describe the macro-level factors of female entrepreneurship in Trinidad and Tobago that contribute to bringing success. The main focus will be on the usage of social media platforms by female entrepreneurs for their online businesses. It will answer the third sub-question: *How do social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, impact business purposes?* First the different ways of using social media for business purposes will be discussed, followed by an analysis of Facebook and Instagram, and ending with a comparison between online and offline marketing methods. This chapter will use findings of the survey, added with information form the in-depth interviews and illustrations from the social media analysis.

*Usage*

The main usage of social media platforms for business purposes is promotion of products and services followed by engagement, and maintaining visibility of the business (figure 21). These ways of using social media depend on what the entrepreneur wants to gain from their business. Some use social media to get sales, which makes their content focused on promotion of their product of service. Others use social media to increase their customer base, then their content is focused on engagement with the audience. And others want to build a reputation with their business, then their content is more focused on maintaining visibility of the business online. Therefore, it depends on what the business owner wants to achieve with their business, what they see as success, which will be mirrored in their social media behaviour.

As stated in chapter 4, many female entrepreneurs mentioned that they did not have experience in social media marketing and therefore don't have the knowledge and skills to use social media optimally for their success. For those people, using social media is ''not instinctive and therefore difficult to use.

Some entrepreneurs mentioned that they just put a photo online, or share events they will be participating in because they don't understand how to create and upload content. It takes them a lot of time to figure out, and that time they could rather be spending on their business. One respondent mentioned that she did not have the mental energy to create a whole social media strategy, next to running a business.

## Ways of using social media
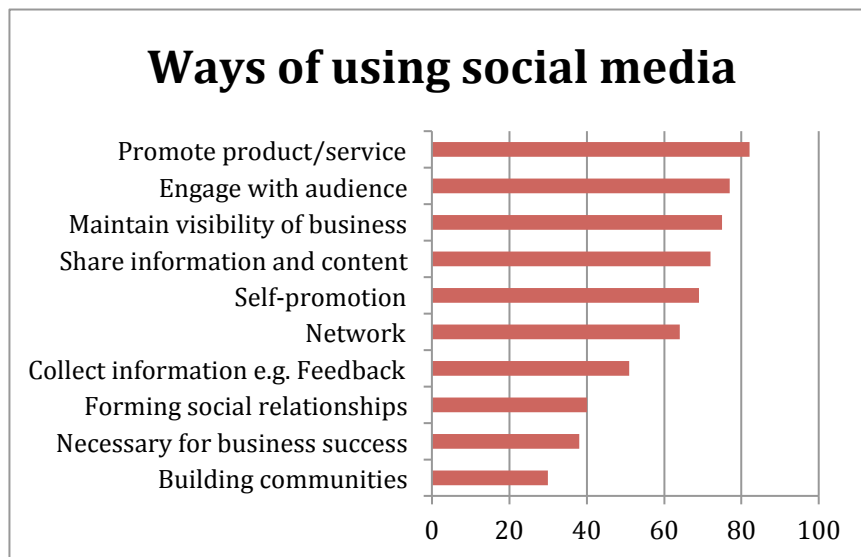


**Figure 23Ways of using social media platforms**

Therefore, they are less active in presenting their content online. One entrepreneur mentioned to just put a title above her photos, and just promotes the events she will be participating in without encouraging or engaging with her audience. She mentioned to be rather responsive than creative, meaning that she will respond to questions or comments, but finds it challenging to create content in a catchy way.

This behaviour reflects the entrepreneur's own personality. As explained by one participant, she is an introvert and does not like to engage with others and therefore, she does not like it on the online sphere as well. ''So these people would be posting abstract content, randomly, without a plan, without a scheme and without a strategy and then they would get frustrated if they don't get the results from the marketing'' (Online marketing consultant). She also explains where this behaviour comes from;

*''The traditional sales approach was easy, when you walk in the store they would be selling it or they don't. So I feel like people go on social media with that mindset that is of a storefront where they can just display their products and services and people will buy it. This is reflected in their content where most of their posts were about to sell, sell, sell. But with social media it is a totally different thing, it is more a long-term approach. Because the customers need to trust you, a long relationship building practice is needed before you can sell online''-* (Online marketing consultant).

However, besides not understanding social media, and a lack of time and energy, these women did understand the need to have a social media presence. Three of them mentioned

to have hires someone to take care of their social media strategy, from which they can learn and elaborate on.

However, the majority of participants mentioned to have been actively thinking about their social media strategy, in terms of how they want to portray themselves and how they want their messages to come across. These can be small in nature, such as thinking about the layout of your feed, or linking personal and business accounts for extra promotion. Or large in nature, such as being aware of your demographics so posts can be created for a targeted audience, or being aware of the timing of your posts as well as using special days, such as Halloween, Christmas, and Mothersday, to create content.

A distinction can be made with the content itself. Some people actively think about their output. They make use of different hashtags (#), make stories, display their reviews, create and edit photos and videos, and use special days as 'Fun-Fact Friday' or 'Throwback-Thursday' to upload weekly content. They try to be engaging with their audience as they understand the relationship-building aspect of social media, as well as the intensity of these online platforms where your content can get lost.

To deal with the latter issue, it is important to be authentic. Social media allows people to create and share any content they want, which results in people having the ability to control the narrative of what kind of image they want to share of their business. The online marketing consultant explained that *"there are certain things that sell online; inspiration sells, hope sells, beauty sells, people want to feel good on social media. And a lot of people realize this. While it might not be their authentic personality they realize it sells. So they create a persona based on this to promote something that is not authentic but it is what sells. This is the online formula that works in most cases"*.

Most participants mentioned that their online image is reflecting their own identity and personality as they don't have to pretend to be someone else to sell. Their content is based on sharing personal stories, or stories about the business where the audience can see developments, challenges and results. This will create personalized businesses that are authentic and a way to connect with customers, ''as people nowadays are so virtual and digital and people love that sense of still reading something real, that pulls them in'' (Digital media consultant).

This control of narrative can also be used to change the image of what is expected from females. By creating posts about one's own business story or by sharing other female

entrepreneurs' stories, the discourse of female entrepreneurs can be influenced by social media. These kind of posts can also be used as an image of role-models for future entrepreneurs, who need that kind of encouragement.

*Platforms*

As mentioned before, Facebook and Instagram are the two most used social media platforms in Trinidad and Tobago (figure 22). Interstingly, Whatsapp is equally used as Instagram, but this paper is focusing on the two main platforms in terms of comparability. The survey displays that Facebook is the most used social media platform for business purposes, yet it is not the most popular. Instagram appears to be favourable over Facebook.
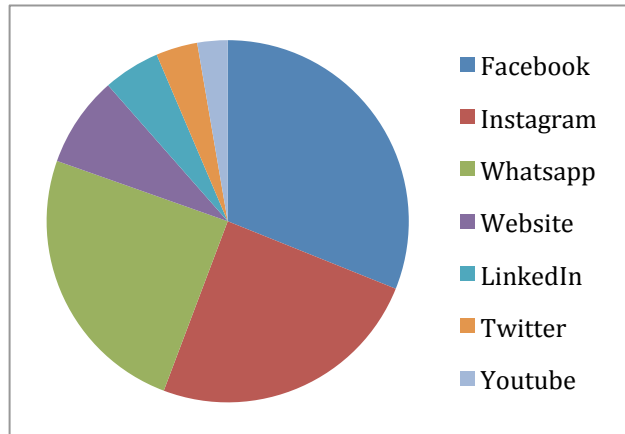


**Figure 24 Social media platforms**

The following table shows the various reasons for using a specific platform.

| Facebook | Both | Instagram |
|---|---|---|
| • Most people start with a Facebook account and are more familiar with this platform. They understand it better which makes it easier to use<br><br>• Manageable with time and budget; cheap advertisement<br><br>• Gives incentives when replying fast; useful for building good reputation | • Targeted demographics on both platforms: youth more active on IG, middle-aged more active on FB<br><br>• IG used as the main platform, FB used for people who don't have IG<br><br>• IG connected to FB; when one uploads content on IG it will automatically appear on FB as well | • More visual, better platform to upload photos<br>• Used for inspiration and engagement<br>• Ability to edit photos<br>• Quick sharing and easy uploading<br>• Layout easier to follow<br>• Better quality<br>• Use of stories and hashtags (#)<br>• Targeted searching instead of lost content on FB<br>• Displays reviews and feedback for others to see |

**Table 4 Facebook vs. Instagram**

According to this table, Instagram has more technical benefits compared to Facebook and is therefore preferred by more people. One interesting finding is that younger people aged 18-24 preferred to use Instagram for their business purposes and middle-aged and older people aged 35-44 prefer to use Facebook, as this is often their first and only social media platform they are using. As mentioned in chapter 4, not many female entrepreneurs have experience in social media marketing, meaning that they have to work with the knowledge and skills they have, which is in their case their familiarity with Facebook.

Younger people aging 18-24 grew up with using social media, which has become part of their lives. They often understand it better, as one participant mentioned that ''IG is not my thing, my daughter taught me it, because the thing is that everyone uses it now as Facebook is dying''. Another participant mentioned that her son told her to start using Instagram as she might get a better reach there.

However, both younger and older entrepreneurs are ware of the need for both Facebook and Instagram as a result of this difference in demographics and use this in their social media strategy. To reach their target audience they adjust their strategy and focus more on a particular platform that is relevant for them.


*In-person / social media marketing*

Besides differences in usage and the social media platforms, there are also differences in online and offline marketing. As the participants were recruited in an offline environment using in-person marketing strategies, it is interesting to research in what way they perceive the online marketing environment. Table 5 shows the results of the reasons for having preferences for online or offline marketing.

Participants were very divided in terms of having a preference for online or offline marketing (figure 23).

**Figure 23 Preference online media over...**

| In-person | Both | Social media |
|---|---|---|
| • Like personal aspect and interaction<br><br>• Getting to know person behind the business<br><br>• Easier to talk<br><br>• Suits personality<br><br>• Ability to see, smell and touch product<br><br>• Facial expressions, tone of voice and body language play a role<br><br>• Allow more authentic connections, better understand customer | • Social media for reach and in-person for engagement<br><br>• Social media for creativity, in-person for connections<br><br>• Social media for getting business out there and to get feedback, in-person for giveaways and samples<br><br>• Need for market pop-up so people know your product beforehand<br><br>• Both are equally valuable<br><br>• Order online, collect at market | • Ability to think about what to say, create identity<br><br>• Product better advertised visually; photo representation<br><br>• Bigger reach<br><br>• No need to be out there<br><br>• Less time-consuming<br><br>• More convenient, simple |

**Table 5 Online vs. offline marketing**

Offline marketing strategies were preferred because of the personal aspect that social media lacks. They emphasized that when use in-person marketing strategies, such as having a market stand, it is easier to talk to customers, respond to questions, explain things to them and therefore build better connections with them. First impressions are really important when you meet someone, and the way you approach them with your body language, tone of voice and facial expressions can really make a difference (Jewellery-maker). With social media, you just sit in front of a screen and are unable to use these personality traits that can make a difference for building relationships with customers. Moreover, some people want to see and test the product first before buying it, and these markets offer the opportunity to display your products. Here, there no link between ages and sectors was found, meaning that these preferences were completely personal and differ per entrepreneur regardless of age and sector.

      Other participants preferred social media marketing as it offers possibilities that

these markets cannot offer. The main reason for using online marketing was the bigger reach one can get with social media, without being out there at a market or needing a store. For home-based businesses this is very convenient and a simple way to market their products. One participant even mentioned that ''*without social media, I wouldn't even start*''. Also, as explained before, social media allows you to create an image of your business and products in a cost-effective way. Here, mainly younger participants aging between 18-24 had a preference for social media marketing, whereas no link was found between sectors. A list of advantages and disadvantages of social media marketing can be found in annex 10.

A large group of female entrepreneurs emphasized the importance of both online and offline marketing as they both had their value. In their view it was not an either online or offline choice, but they saw the benefits of combining both methods. They perceive social media as a medium to get your business out there and increase the reach of people being aware of your business, whereas in-person marketing was seen as important for engagement and establishing connections. Here, mainly younger (18-24) and middle-aged (25-34) entrepreneurs were in favour of combining both methods and most of them had a jewellery business.

One participant mentioned that people would ask for her social media accounts at events she was attending. This is a good example of how offline and online marketing are intertwined. Nowadays, people already assume that as a business owner, you already have social media accounts for your business, where they can see the way you behave online and therefore rate its reliability, as well as using it as means of communication by asking questions or leaving feedback. As another participant mentioned, ''there is a lady who is in her late forties, early fifties, and she is probably the only person who communicates with me through my actual number, and everyone else is just like ah I see you on Instagram and Facebook, and it is actually a good'' (Soap maker).

*Conclusion*

The way people make use of social media depends on what they want to achieve with their business. For someone, it might be a hobby or a side-business, whereas for other it is their fulltime occupation and means of income. This will be reflected in their online behaviour. For those hobbyists using social media is a fun way to display their products or to meet new people, and often they are not strategically using social media as well as not spending much

time on it. On contrary to people who see it as a serious business are often more prepared in terms or strategies and content creation, as they understand the benefits of social media and the way their online behaviour impacts their business.

There is a difference in demographics regarding Facebook and Instagram, where the older ones are more active on Facebook and the younger ones on Instagram. Almost everyone is aware of these differences, which reflects their usage of platforms based on target audience.

Another difference has been found regarding online and offline marketing. This depends on the personality of the entrepreneur that is reflected on their marketing behaviour. Some like to talk, in which they prefer  in-person marketing, whereas others are more introvert and like to create content rather than engaging with it. In overall, female entrepreneurs are aware of the benefits of both and nowadays it is actually difficult to separate these two marketing opportunities, where a combination of both will bring the best out of one's business.

# Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this research was to get insights in the various factors influencing the success of home-based businesses, and the usage of social media for business purposes by female entrepreneurs in Trinidad and Tobago.

As mentioned before, entrepreneurship is a gendered concept with different expectations for women who are bear the prime responsibility of taking care of the household. There are many reasons of starting an online business, that are linked to the perception of success by female entrepreneurship. These motivations, together with social factors and new technologies open up new possibilities for female businesses. The answer to the question: *''What is the impact of social media on the success of home-based businesses of female entrepreneurs in Trinidad and Tobago?''* is build up though three sub-questions.

1. What individual factors of female entrepreneurs contribute to their perception of success?

Entrepreneurial motivations in Trinidad and Tobago can be divided in push and pull factors. Interestingly, the majority middle-aged and older female entrepreneurs aging from 35-44 and 45> years old started their business out of a hobby, where social media played a role in developing it into an online business opportunity. Their main motivations of pursuing their passion and being their own boss derive from the so-called pull-factors, meaning that these women have had the opportunity to establish their online business, rather than pursuing a career of self-employment out of necessity. Their level of success can therefore be categorized as non-financial goals, but rather individual or social, where any profit is seen as an 'extra' but not as necessary for the business.

Younger entrepreneurs aging from 18-24 emphasized the lack of opportunities in the county, and a need for a secondary income. Their businesses often did not start out of a hobby, but rather a combination of the skills as a result of their education and work/extra-curricular experiences. Social media played a role in expanding one's knowledge by providing a platform where people can find all the necessary information and even tutorials. These type of entrepreneurs often pursue a fulltime business rather than a hobby or side-

business. And as many of them are in need of an extra source of income, resulting their levels of success to be categorized as financial goals.

Two motivations were based on individual factors and one on financial factor, thus dismissing the general idea that women start a online business to balance their work and family life. It is not in their main motivations.

These findings are in accordance with Alam et al, (2011) who found out that internal motivations of women entrepreneurs are positively and significantly affecting success of female entrepreneurship in small businesses. *''A woman who is internally motivated to start a business that she is interested in will first and foremost put in more time and effort in order to make it a success''.* The motivation of females to start their business, either push or pull factors, is therefore linked to what they eventually want to achieve with their business, financial or non-financial goals of success.

Even though females are high educated in Trinidad and Tobago, many female entrepreneurs had no relevant education or previous experiences in entrepreneurship as well as in social media marketing. As a result, they combined the knowledge and skills they already had to start their business and used social media as a tool for learning new skills relevant for their business.

2. In what way do societal factors in Trinidad and Tobago contribute to business purposes?

The level of support from the government, in terms of funding, providing information and training, is very minimal. That is why many female entrepreneurs value their social network of friends, family and within their household. Being surrounded by a supportive network affect female entrepreneurs in the sense that they can be positively motivated to start a business.

This is in accordance with the findings of Javadian and Singh (2012) where support from the family plays a role in achieving success. However, they also emphasize that women who only get support from friends and family are in a disadvantaged position as they miss out a connection with other like-minded people. For the entrepreneurs who only get in touch with their own circle of family and friends, or those who don't have a strong supportive network, social media contributes to provide a platform where other female

entrepreneurs can connect, by building communities and online groups, and therefore increasing one's online network and perspectives for their business success.

Social networks of friends and family can also play a role in sharing experiences that can contribute to an increase in knowledge and skills of the entrepreneur, thereby filling the gap left by a lack of experience and government training. Online social groups also provide a platform for advice, support and even online training in the form of webinars or Q&A's where people can not only network but also learn some relevant information they can apply to their businesses.

Besides support, the expectations of females being responsible for the household still persists in Trinidad and Tobago, where a slight majority faces challenges in balancing business and professional life. However social media does not particularly play a role in facilitating this balance where time is mentioned to be an important issue.

3. How do social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, impact business purposes?

The way one makes use of social media differ per individual and really depends on what they want to achieve with it and how much knowledge they have about it. The main motivation of an entrepreneur to start with their business will also determine their online behaviour to achieve success. For entrepreneurs with a side-business, a strong social media presence and strategy is not really needed, as their businesses are not a necessity that is focused on financial goals. For entrepreneurs whose business is their fulltime occupation, their usage of these platforms differ in the sense that they are more aware of their online presence and the content they put out in a strategic way.

Besides motivation, education of and experiences with social media marketing facilitate the usage of it. Younger people who grew up with social media are more used to these platforms and understand how these work, whereas older women struggle with using these platforms as it is not instinctively for them. Having the right set of knowledge and experiences in social media marketing, will increase the understanding of these platforms as well as providing the ability to create strategies to purposively target people to meet their business purposes. One example of a strategy is to control the narrative of one puts on their social media pages. This can be used to emphasize the authenticity of one's business in this

competitive online business environment. Therefore, by actively thinking about your content strategy and by actively forming groups and building communities with like-minded people, you can influence the image of your online business in they way they want to. This is the called the power of social media.

# Conclusion

The micro-factors consisting of the motivations, previous education and experiences of female entrepreneurs to start their online business contribute to what they perceives as success, and set the bottom-line of what they want to achieve with their businesses. Age appears to play an important role in this, as newer generation grew up with it and previous generations are struggling with.

Institutional and social support in an environment were gender differences are nowadays changing, influence the motivations and experiences of female entrepreneurs and allow social media to assists them in connecting and building communities with other like-minded people.

The macro factor of social media platforms, ties everything together. One's motivation will influence their online behaviour and need for social media, and one's experiences will influence their ability to understand the strategy behind social media. These are also related to the expectations of women to take care of the household as well as a way to change the discourse of how an entrepreneur looks like.
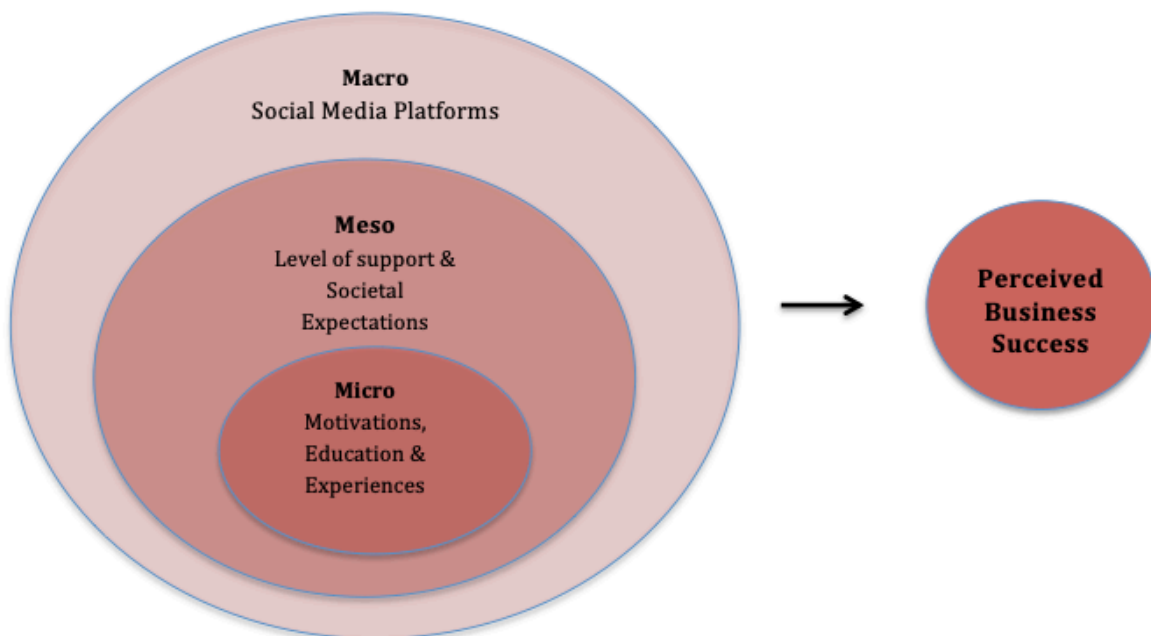


**Figure 24 Conceptual model after analysis**

Social media offers many possibilities for facilitating business success. It offers a platform for people to establish a home-based business, in a cost-effective and convenient way. Also, it

brings visibility to business by providing the opportunity to display products and services. With social media one can reach an unlimited audience meaning that it can reach way beyond any other form of marketing.

The downsides of having an online home-based business is that online visibility by an unlimited audience means intellectual property rules become less powerful which makes it easier to steal one's content. Adding to this is that because more businesses are becoming virtual, competition increases resulting in an overflow of online content where yours can get lost. Also, social media can't replace the offline marketing environment, where personality traits can be used to connect in a more authentic way with the audience.

Secondly, social media allows vendors to connect with customers and other vendors by building relationships and online communities. This will contribute to an increase their network and might lead to many new opportunities in the field of learning, selling and/or meeting new people. By communicating with the audience, receiving messages and feedback, one's level of self-confidence might increase as well.

The downside of this is that not all the comments, feedback and online interaction in general, will be positive. It is easier for people to hide behind their screens and type out whatever they think. Also, networking with others can be seen as a supportive and helpful tool to broaden one's network, yet it can also be seen as another form of competition.

Lastly, social media played a role in expanding one's knowledge, in terms of online tutorials, courses, or as inspiration for creativity. Also, the other way around, it can be used to educate other people by creating and sharing educational content. Social media provides the ability to create any content you want, thereby controlling the narrative of your business.

However, to the benefits of social media for business success, one needs to understand how it works. Branding and social media strategies are needed to strategically target people online. For many home-based business owners, this is a huge time issue as they have other responsibilities, including running a business and taking care of the household, which is slowly changing. Also, the narrative that is put online is not always authentic to the business owner. Some people use several strategies to increase their customer base of income in a manner that is not reflective of their own identity. This can create a lack of trust of customers when buying online.

In overall, the impact of social media on home-based businesses of female entrepreneurs depends on what they want to achieve with their business, therefore what they perceive as success. This will be reflected in their online behaviour and the way they will use social media for their business purposes.

Nowadays, many businesses in Trinidad are using social media as it has become the norm to be online. It is therefore relevant for one's business to keep up with these technological advancements and have an online presence as well. However, specifically for the craft sector, people who are interested in these type of works do appreciate the in-person communication. The personal aspect of getting to know the person behind the business as well as actually seeing the product in real-life creates a level of trust that is difficult, however not impossible, to establish online. Advices for future entrepreneurs can be found in annex 11.

For further studies, in the field of female entrepreneurship in Trinidad, it is interesting to conduct  comparative analysis of males and females and their use of social media for business purposes. By using this multi-level analysis and by including male perspectives on these levels, the differences between genders become visible and also in which factors these differences take place. This will help to build up better and targeted frameworks regarding gender equality in the country. Another interesting factor to include in one's research is the differences between the two islands of Trinidad and Tobago, as one participant mentioned that ''there are more opportunities and more markets in Trinidad, so people living there would benefit more from that'' (Soap maker).

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# Annexes

## Annex 1. Map Trinidad and Tobago



The three red stars mark the places of the craft markets, where the participants for the in-depth interviews were recruited

# Annex 2. Business sectors survey respondents



Accounting, Banking & Finance 1%

Administrative Services 5%

Communications, Marketing and Public Relations 8%

Construction and Real Estate 2%

Education 5%

Engineering 0%

Fashion, Beuty and Retail 32%

Law 0%

Fitness, Nutrition and Wellness 4%

Restaurant and Food Services 16%

Technology 1%

Other (please specify) 26%
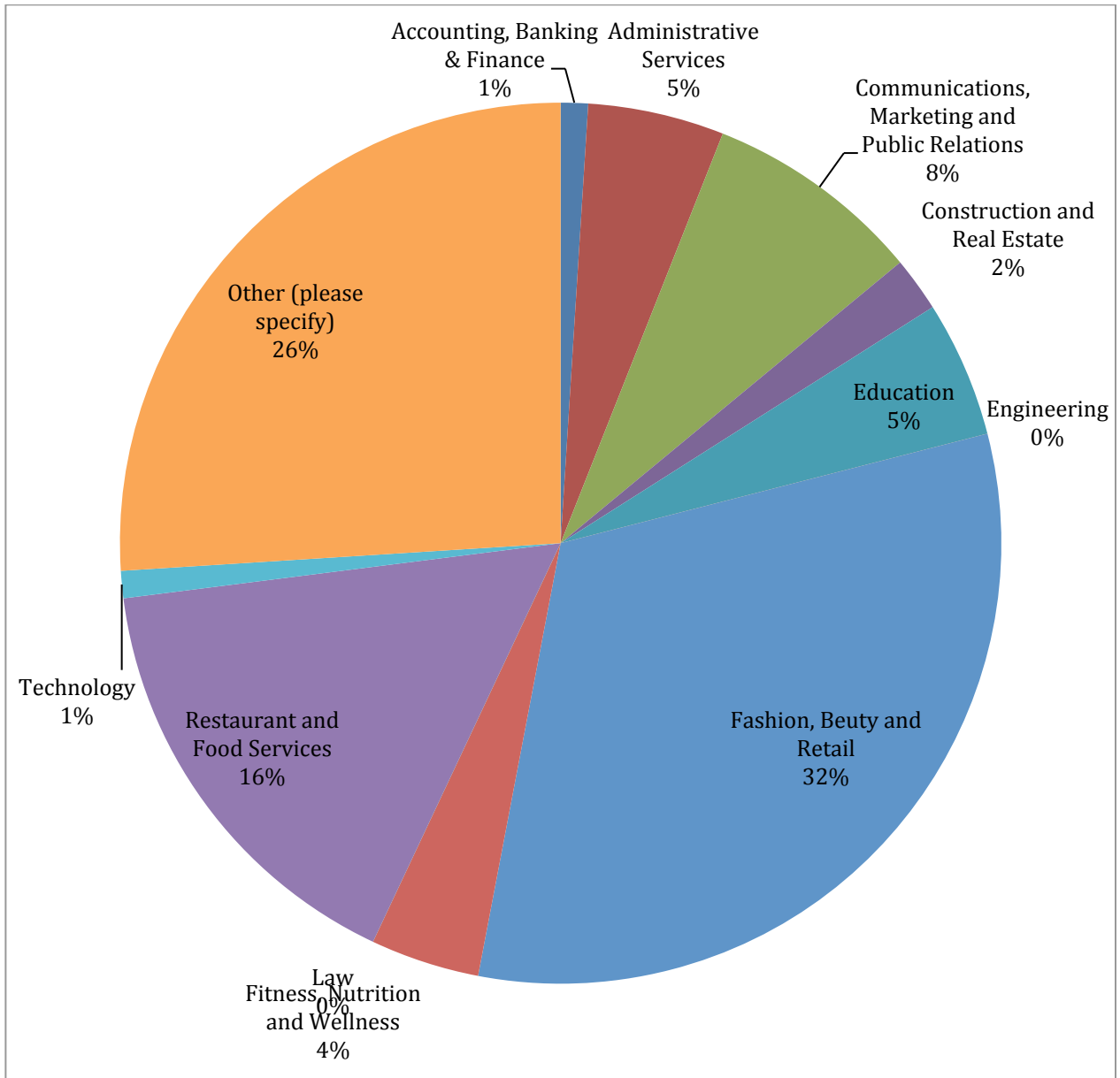
## Annex 3. Survey questions

## Survey

Dear entrepreneurs,

This survey is part of my master research at Utrecht University, The Netherlands. Its purpose is to gain understanding of the impact of social media on empowerment and opportunities of female entrepreneurs in Trinidad & Tobago.

The questions are open for both male and female entrepreneurs and will relate to your experiences as an entrepreneur as well as your perception of the use of social media for your business.

The survey consists of … questions and will take about 10 minutes to fill in. Your answers will only be used for this research and will not be shared with anyone else. Participation is completely anonymous and voluntary as you may decide not to answer any questions if you do not feel comfortable to do so.

Thank you in advance and I will highly appreciate your cooperation!

Kind regards,
Sharon Gogar
1.

Utrecht University

What was your main motivation of starting your business? Only 1 answer possible.

a. Acquire social status
b. To be your own boss
c. Profitability
d. Contribution to society
e. Pursue passion
f. Family tradition
g. Flexibility
h. Family support
i. Self-development
j. Lack of opportunities in labour market

2. Do you have previous education/training about entrepreneurship?      A. Yes   B. No

3. Do you have previous education/training about social marketing?      A. Yes   B. No

4. How long have you been working in business?
   a. No previous experience
   b. <1 year
   c. 1-3 years
   d. 3-5 years
   e. 5> years

5. On average, how many hours do you work a day?
   a. <1 hour
   b. 1-5 hours
   c. 6-10 hours
   d. 10> hours

6. Who is the head of the household?
   a. Myself
   b. Spouse
   c. Parent

7. Do you have domestic responsibilities besides your professional work? (e.g. cooking, cleaning, taking care of children)
   a. Yes
   b. No

8. On average, how many hours do you spend on your domestic responsibilities?
   a. <1 hour
   b. 1-4 hours
   c. 6-10 hours
   d. 10> hours

9.  do you experience difficulties in balancing domestic work and professional work?
    a.  Yes
    b.  No

10. My business income is the household's
    a.  Main source of income
    b.  Secondary source of income

11. Level of support
    On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) – *Social support*

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Encouragement and support from friends and family to start a business |  |  |  |  |  |
| Encouragement and support within the household to start a business |  |  |  |  |  |
| Entrepreneurship creates the ability to balance work and family life |  |  |  |  |  |
| Entrepreneurship brings flexibility in working hours |  |  |  |  |  |
| Being accepted as a woman in business |  |  |  |  |  |
| Difficulties in gaining confidence of clients and suppliers |  |  |  |  |  |

12. Level of support
    On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) – *Institutional support*

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| It is easy to start a  business in Trinidad and Tobago |  |  |  |  |  |
| It is easy to get credit to start your own business |  |  |  |  |  |
| Accessing training workshops is easy |  |  |  |  |  |
| Information about starting a business, getting credit or training is readily available |  |  |  |  |  |
| The government is putting efforts and services in bringing ease of doing business |  |  |  |  |  |

13. Perceived barriers of entrepreneurship
    a.  Regulatory
    b.  Cultural and social
    c.  Economic and financial
    d.  No barriers

14. Which digital media platform has your business made use of? Multiple answers are possible.
    a.  Website
    b.  Facebook
    c.  Instagram
    d.  LinkedIn

      e.   WhatsApp

      f.   Twitter

      g.   Youtube

15. When did you start using social media for your business?

      a.   Immediately, during start-up

      b.   After a while

16. How regularly do you use social media for your business?

      a.   Daily

      b.   More than once per week

      c.   About once a week

      d.   Less than once a week

17. In what way do you use social media? Multiple answers are possible.

      a.   Self-promotion

      b.   Network

      c.   Engage with audience

      d.   Promote product/service

      e.   Forming social relationships

      f.   Maintain visibility of business

      g.   Necessary for business success

      h.   Building communities

      i.   Share information and content

      j.   Collect information e.g. customer behaviour

18. What devices do you use to access the internet for your business? Multiple answers are possible.

      a.   Smartphone

      b.   Laptop

      c.   Personal Computer

19. The use of social media platforms has led to customer

      a.   Increase

      b.   Decrease

      c.   No change

20. The use of social media platforms has led my income to

      a.   Increase

      b.   Decrease

      c.   No change

21. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements
    On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social media is important for the development of my business |  |  |  |  |  |
| Social media platforms have contributed to a better access to the market for my business |  |  |  |  |  |
| The use of social media for business purposes brings flexibility in working hours |  |  |  |  |  |
| It is easy to start a business without social media |  |  |  |  |  |
| I prefer online marketing over personal marketing (in-person networking, events, workshops and training) |  |  |  |  |  |
| I prefer online marketing over traditional online tools (e-mail, websites and blogging) |  |  |  |  |  |
| The use of social media creates the ability to balance work and family life |  |  |  |  |  |

22. Do you have a specific social media strategy? (e.g. targets, content calendar etc.)
    a. Yes
    b. Yes but differ per platform
    c. No

23. If yes, what is your strategy primarily based on?
    a. Creating and sharing photos
    b. Creating and sharing videos
    c. Engagement in the comment section
    d. Building social relationships with customers
    e. Does not apply

24. Are you involved in online groups?
    a. Yes
    b. No

25. If yes, to what extent are these groups beneficial in building a social network?
    a. Not beneficial
    b. Somewhat beneficial
    c. Very beneficial
    d. Not applicable

26. What are the most important communication skills or traits you primarily utilize when operating your business? Multiple answers are possible.
    a. Listening
    b. Negotiating
    c. Selling
    d. Speaking
    e. Writing

27. What are the most important communication skills or traits you primarily utilize when operating your business online? Multiple answers are possible.
    a. Listening
    b. Negotiating
    c. Selling
    d. Speaking
    e. Writing

28. Which of the following unpleasant sides of social media have you ever coped with? Multiple answers are possible
    a. Negative comments
    b. Bad feedback
    c. Online misogyny
    d. Hacking
    e. Poor internet connection
    f. Privacy concerns
    g. Difficulties in calculating return on investment
    h. Imitation of works
    i. Unfair competition
    j. Unidentified target audience

29. According to you, what is the most beneficial side of social media?

30. My online marketing success is rated by: (multiple answers possible)
    a. Number of followers
    b. Number of page viewers
    c. Number of likes
    d. Engagement rate

31. Gender:
    a. Male
    b. Female

32. Age
    a. 18-24
    b. 25-34
    c. 35-44
    d. 45-54
    e. 55+

33. Marital status
    a. Married
    b. Unmarried

    c. Divorces/Widowed

34. What is the highest education you completed?
    a. Primary school
    b. Secondary
    c. College/University
    d. Graduate School

35. When did you start with this business?
    a. Less than 1 year ago
    b. 1-2 years ago
    c. 2-3 years ago
    d. 3-4 years ago
    e. 5> years ago

36. Which of the following industries best describes your current business? (select only one of the following)
    a. Accounting, Banking and Finance
    b. Administrative Services
    c. Communications, Marketing, and Public Relations
    d. Construction and Real Estate
    e. Education
    f. Engineering
    g. Fashion, Beauty and Retail
    h. Fitness, Nutrition and Wellness
    i. Law
    j. Restaurant and Food Services
    k. Technology
    l. Other

37. Do you offer your customer a product or a service?
    a. Product
    b. Service
    c. Both products and services
    d. Other (please specify)

38. Business is conducted primarily
    a. Online (Internet and social media)
    b. Offline (in-person networking, events, training workshops)
    c. Both in equal amounts

39. Number of employees
    a. Self-employed

  b. 1-3

  c. 3-5

  d. 5>

40. Where do you work?

  a. Home-based business

  b. Outside home

41. Monthly income

  a. <$1000

  b. $1001 – $1500

  c. $1501 – $2000

  d. $2001 – $2500

  e. $2501 – $3000

  f. $3000>

  g. Prefer not to say

42. Do you have any other sources of income besides your own business? A. Yes B. No

43. If you wish to receive the outcomes of this research (around August 2019), you can fill in your e-mail address below:

# In-depth interview

## Introduction and Consent

Hello, my name is Sharon Gogar and I am an MSc International Development student at Utrecht University, The Netherlands. In collaboration with Youth Business Trinidad & Tobago, I am conducting my research on female entrepreneurship and social media.

The purpose of this interview is to gain understanding of the influence of social media on businesses specifically owned by females. The questions will, therefore, relate to your own experiences as a female entrepreneur and your perceptions with regard to social media that are used for your business purposes.

Participation in this interview is completely anonymous, your name will not be used and your answers will be used for this research project only. Also, participation is voluntarily as you may decide not to answer any questions if you do not feel comfortable.

This interview will take about 30 minutes and I would like to record it in order to be able to process everything afterwards as well as to include the answers rightfully in my report. Are you willing to give consent to participating in this interview and the recording of this interview?

Utrecht University

**Opening questions**
1. Can you briefly tell me about you and your business? For instance,
   o *Employees, HBB, working hours*

**Motivations of entrepreneurship**
2. What was your main motivation to start your own business
   o Role of education/age, specific sector

3. Do you have some previous education and/or experience with entrepreneurship? And with social media marketing?
   o Benefits or needs of these?

**Domestic support and responsibilities**
4. Are you responsible for the domestic responsibilities in your household?
   o Do these impact your ability to do business?

5. To what extent did you feel supported by your environment when starting your business?
   o *friends/family. within your household*
   o *Support from other entrepreneurs*
      o *What role does your social network play?*

6. How do you think that your business has improved your level of independence?
   o *As well as your self-confidence?*

7. Domestic responsibilities are seen as a form of unpaid labour, you spend much time on it and get no money in return. Social media can be seen as a modern form of unpaid labour as you spend much time on it but get no money from it in return. What is you opinion on this? Do you see social media also as a form of unpaid labour?

**Business environment**
8. What is the business environment in Trinidad like?
   *Easy to start? Easy to get credit Accessible trainings and workshops? Sufficient online information? Role of government?*

9. What were the main challenges that you have experienced?
   o What is a possible solution for this?
   o Do you think the business environment differs between males and females?

**Social media marketing**
10. What platforms are you using and why did you choose to use (a) specific social media platform(s)?

11. What are the main objectives for using social media for your business purposes?
12. What do social media contribute to business?
   o *Think about customers, level of income, getting access to the market*

13. Without social media, are you able to do the same things?
   o Would you say that the online environment is similar to real life?

14. Do you prefer in-person marketing or social media marketing? Please explain.

15. Do you feel that businesses in general are using more social media?
   o Feel the need to use social media as well?

**Social media communication**
16. Do you use social media for personal use as well?
   o If yes, does your online behaviour differ from your business page? In terms of liking, commenting, engaging.
   o Do you feel like there is some expected behaviour online?

17. In what way do you make use of social media? What are your posts mostly based on?
   o *Focused on liking, sharing, commenting, use of hash tags, advertisements etc. Creation of posts that will generate likes or more reactions in the comment section?*
   o Do you have a specific social media strategy?
   o Are you part of online groups? What is their role in your social media usage?

18. Name one positive and one negative side of social media.

19. What do you define as success for your business?

Final question:
Do you have any advice for future (female) entrepreneurs?

This is the end of the interview. I want to thank you for your time and effort to participate in this interview. Do you have any questions or comments yourself?

**Thank You!**

# Annex 5. Markets participants recruitment


Craft market at UWI


South Market at San Fernando


Mother's Day Market at NAPA, Port of Spain


Things TT at UWI

| Date | Market | Location |
|------|--------|----------|
| 23/03 | Craft Markets | UWI |
| 06/04 | South Market | San Fernando |
| 07/04 | UpMarket | Port of Spain |
| 13/04 | ThingsTT | UWI |

# Annex 6. Information participants in-depth interviews

| | Sector | HBB | Type of business | Connection | Age sector |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Candle-making | HBB | Side-business | Craft markets @UWI | 35 – 44 |
| 2 | Jewellery | HBB | Side-business | Craft markets @UWI | 45> |
| 3 | Body and soap | HBB | Side-business | Craft markets @UWI | 25-34 |
| 4 | Consultancy | Space | Full-time | Recommended | 35-44 |
| 5 | Food | HBB | Full-time | Craft markets @UWI | 18-24 |
| 6 | Jewellery | HBB | Side-business | Craft markets @UWI | 45> |
| 7 | Food | HBB | Full-time | South market @San Fernando | 35-44 |
| 8 | Body and soaps | HBB | Side-business | UpMarket @Port of Spain | 45> |
| 9 | Food | HBB | Full-time | Recommended | 25-34 |
| 10 | Jewellery | HBB | Full-time | South market @San Fernando | 35-44 |
| 11 | Stationary | HBB | Full-time | South market @San Fernando | 18-24 |
| 12 | Jewellery | Space | Full-time | UpMarket @Port of Spain | 35-44 |
| 13 | Consultancy | HBB | Full-time | South market @San Fernando | 35-44 |
| 14 | Food | HBB | Full-time | South market @San Fernando | 25-34 |
| 15 | Jewellery | HBB | Full-time | ThingsTT @UWI | 35-44 |
| 16 | Food | HBB | Side-business | Recommended | 35-44 |
| 17 | Candle-making | HBB | Full-time | Craft markets @UWI | 35-44 |
| 18 | Art | HBB | Side-business | South market @San Fernando | 18-24 |
| 19 | Cosmetics | HBB | Full-time | Craft markets @UWI | 25-34 |
| 20 | Jewellery | HBB | Side-business | ThingsTT @UWI | 18-24 |
| 21 | Candle-making | HBB | Full-time | ThingsTT @UWI | 25-34 |

# Annex 7. Ethical Review

## 1. Access to participants / participant recruitment

Participants for the in-depth interviews were selected by opportunistic and snowball sampling, using contacts from four different craft markets. The respondents of the survey were all recruited online by using the snowball-method. The survey was put online and shared by me and my host organization YBTT. Moreover, I already was a member of several Facebook-groups where I have access to a network of female entrepreneurs who are also using Facebook for their businesses. Therefore, I shared my survey in five different Facebook-groups. I will start with Facebook as it is the main social media platform that is used in Trinidad.

## 2. Informed consent

Participants were always informed about the interview itself, what was expected from them, as well as their rights to not answer a question or stopping the interview. A written consent template was made for the in-depth interviews. Participants will be reminded that their participation is completely voluntarily. This also included information about the usage of data collected during the interviews and how these will be used in the final paper. For the surveys, an introduction was made to inform the respondents about the survey, the questions and their rights of not answering a question or stopping the survey. Honesty and transparency are highly appreciated by participants and respondents.

## 3. Potential risk to participants, including data protection and confidentiality

The topic of female entrepreneurship and digital media is not a highly sensitive topic. Therefore, I assume that people are not really reluctant about sharing information. The participants are reminded about their anonymity and confidentiality or their answers in order to protect the participant. No names will be used linked to quotes and pseudonyms will be used for personal case-studies. Explanation about data and findings will also be provided.

**4. Sharing of findings**

Notes and transcripts of interviews will not be shared with anyone else. The host organization has the results of the complete survey as well, as their business account of SurveyMonkey was used to create the survey in the first place. However, sharing information and creating a reflection of the collected data can be of important value to one. Therefore, I will create a blog about the survey findings that will be shared with the host organization, respondents of the survey, and on the website and social media accounts of the host organization. The reason for a blog is that it is easier to share online and more appealing to read than a full thesis as well as it might have negative impact on the respondents. My supervisor and a second reader will read the final thesis. It will also be shared with the host organization, as well as with participants that announced to be interested in it.

**5. Conflict of interest**

As a researcher I will always try my best to avoid situations of conflict. I will keep relationships with my supervisor, host organizations and participants. Building trust is an important factor when conducting fieldwork. I approached my participants first at the markets to introduce myself and to give them the opportunity to get to know me personally and ask questions about my research. Many of them were less reluctant to meet up afterwards as they already got the opportunity to meet me in real life.

**6. Positionality as a researcher**

As a researcher conducting fieldwork abroad, it is important to be aware of the impact one can have on the respondents as well as on the collection of data. As a brown woman, I completely blended into society where people even considered me to be from Trinidad. This was highly convenient as it felt like power relations between researcher and participant were equal. Also, as a female myself, the fact that I interviewed all female entrepreneurs also played a role in communicating with participants. People were very open and willing to share details about their business.

# Annex 8. Success-factors of female entrepreneurs in Trinidad & Tobago

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Individual factors** | Reputable brand | Being or having products that are considered as good or trustworthy. Having an image that is truth to the entrepreneurs themselves and reflects the message behind the business, which is understood by customers and online audience. This can be used as positive word of mouth. Also, the creation of the ability to become one of the top businesses in its sector. |
| | Personal improvements | Enjoying the personal benefits of having an online business, including the creation of more opportunities, the ability to keep adapting, and relaxation. To be able to meet personal goals. |
| **Social factors** | Customer satisfaction | First of all to get people wear, use and like one's work. Second, to give customers a 'wow-reaction' and to influence them positively when using one's product. Third, to give customers the ability to create experiences and memories with one's product. |
| | Physical store | To have a building where people can go to and to be the first thing that people think about in need of one's product/service. |
| | Make a difference | To educate customers and online audiences, and to eventually make a difference in Trinidad and Tobago. |
| **Economic factors** | Profits | The amount of money left after expenses have been paid. For the majority of women their businesses are the second income in the household, and therefore their profits are seen as an additional amount of money they can use. Especially when their investments have been regained, their profit is purely extra. |
| | Sales | To actually sell products and/or services, which means that people like and understand one's works. To have a steady return customers and increased income. |
| | Financial independence | Ability to sustain one's business without putting money in it. |

# Annex 9. Examples content online groups



shared a live video.
Admin · July 30 at 1:31 AM

75 Views

Kelisha Mills Coaching was live.
July 30 at 1:30 AM

Like Page

Sometimes we go through a bit of a lull in our lives, and this stops our creativity and we lose our enthusiasm. 😆 Today we talk about how you can get your creat
...



June 30, 2018

For Trinidad and Tobago persons. How did you get your small business off the ground?

3      4 Comments  Seen by 85



shared a link.
Admin · July 19 at 7:32 PM

HAVE YOU REGISTERED YET?? Join us at Uncorked Wines and Spirits Ltd next Thursday 25th, July from 5.30 pm for our Wine & Cheese Soiree.

You don't want to miss this event!! Hear from the newly installed board about its plans for the 2019/2020 term.  Join us to develop your professional network, and meet and mingle with each other in a relaxed atmosphere.

REGISTER TODAY using the link below



Admin · 4 hrs

Hey Lady,

Just checking in. Have you signed up for my exclusive Webinar for Mompreneurs: "The Mompreneur's Guide to More Happiness, More Time and More Money" happening tomorrow evening at 8pm EST.

We cover the most effective ways you can achieve these three key aspects of an expanded life. You won't want to miss out. For those of you who signed up, you will have full access to the replay.

Click the link below to secure your spot.

I'll see you on the inside.
Cheers!

# Annex 10. Advantages and disadvantages of social media marketing

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|
| **Visibility**<br>• Being noticed<br>• Getting to display products and brand<br>• Exposure to other people's crafts | **Fast media**<br>• Loss of content – too much information and people online<br>• Unidentified target audience<br>• Pressure to post content to keep up visibility and awareness<br>• Finding authenticness<br>• Unfair competition |
| **Awareness**<br>• Promotion of brand and events<br>• Getting to know the person behind the business<br>• Ability to get message across – to educate and influence others | **Copying**<br>• Stealing ideas<br>• No respect for / understanding of intellectual property |
| **Relevance**<br>• Almost everyone is present on social networks<br>• Nowadays people reach out faster on social media<br>• Opens up new opportunities | **Criticism**<br>• Bad comments<br>• Negative feedback – can influence reputation<br>• Not everyone will like all content<br>• Dealing with no response or engagement<br>• |
| **Convenience**<br>• Easily accessible<br>• Easy to make a page<br>• Ability to observe and monitor customer behaviour<br>• Influence narrative of business | **Online harassment**<br>• Stalking – due to personal information online<br>• Scammers<br>• Privacy concerns<br>• Hacking<br>• |
| **Reach**<br>• Wide range of people – also internationally<br>• Widens the circle of potential customers<br>• In a short time<br>• Several persons at once<br>• Targeted demographics<br>• | **Time consuming**<br>• Need online strategy for better results<br>• Addictive usage |
| **Communication**<br>• Ability for customers to give opinion, feedback and asking questions<br>• Easy and quick communications<br>• Quicker time response | **24/7 availability**<br>• Expectation and pressure to respond immediately<br>• Expectations to be available at all times<br>• Removal of traditional working hours |

| Connection | Other |
|---|---|
| • Ability to engage with audience<br>• Building community of people interested in product/service<br>• Connecting and networking with other entrepreneurs in similar sectors | • Poor internet connection<br>• Fake news<br>• |
| **Sales**<br>• Increase in income | |
| **Market**<br>• Access to market<br>• Ability to conduct market research | |
| **Cost-effective**<br>• Free usage<br>• Cheap advertisement | |

## Annex 11. Advices for future entrepreneurs

❖ Follow your dream!
Try something you love. Do something you're passionate about, because you have to love what you do. It becomes less of a job when you enjoy doing it.

❖ Just go for it!
There will be a million reasons to not do it, but if you have an idea, if you believe in your business idea, start small and build up.

❖ Research!
Read as much as you can about business practices, how to improve your product, customer service, branding and marketing.
o Research the market in which you want to operate in and find a niche that is missing or needs to be build and focus on that.

❖ Make a business plan!
Plan and anticipate failure, but never success. Be practical, be observant and be consistent.
o Observe everything and everyone associated with your business; see how customers react, what they like or don't like etc.

❖ Find mentors!
People who are doing the same things as you or who just have the right knowledge to help you along. Network with others.

❖ Recognize the importance of customer service!
They define the success of your business.

❖ Don't be discouraged!
There will be challenges and obstacles.
o Don't take negativity as a failure but as a ladder and always trust your creativity.

❖ Keep focused!
Never lose sight of what it is you're trying to achieve with your business. You should be constantly at the forefront of whatever you do.

❖ Be risky, be your authentic self and don't give up!

❖ Make sacrifices!
You have to make decisions on certain things. It's a lot of hard work and dedication, and you need to change your mindset.

❖ Be realistic!
About what entrepreneurship is and about what you need to do to get where you want to be.

❖ Be honest!
With what you want to do and recognize your skills. Don't undersell yourself, and recognize your worth. You never have to step out of who you are to meet someone else's demands.

❖ You cant please everybody!
Whatever you plan to do, do it well. Just do the best you can for the customers that are interested in your work, otherwise you will live your life creating things for everyone and be frustrated as it will never be enough.