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Selecting Self-Employment

-The Influences on Female Entrepreneurs in Gaborone

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ABSTRACT

This study is based on an adapted version of the Shapero model. It aims to answer the research questions; "What makes female entrepreneurs in Gaborone perceive entrepreneurship as a desirable and feasible career choice?" and "How do role models influence the perception of the desirability and feasibility of an entrepreneurial career for female entrepreneurs in Gaborone?" This is done through utilizing a qualitative approach consisting of interviews with ten female entrepreneurs in Gaborone, in addition to three experts. Our conclusions are that the specific desirability of an entrepreneurial career consists of economic opportunities, personal development and an ability to lead and change the society. The view of entrepreneurial feasibility is primarily increased by enactive mastery and social persuasion, such as positive feedback from personal and professional contacts. The role models of the female entrepreneurs can be categorized into public figures, professional and personal contacts. Public figures mainly influence the desirability of entrepreneurship through functioning as sources of inspiration to set high goals. Professional and personal contacts influence both desirability and feasibility. Mothers were found to be the most influential type of role model.

Keywords: Female entrepreneurship, role models, perceived desirability, perceived feasibility, specific desirabilities, self-efficacy, gender

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Finally, we were inspired and impressed by the stories and encounters with the ten entrepreneurs we interviewed during the course of the study. They are our role models.

Gaborone, 17 May 2010

Anna Björnberg and Sara Almqvist

1. Introduction

Botswana is one of the most stable countries in Africa and it is the continent's longest continuous multi-party democracy. When Botswana became independent from Great Britain in 1966, it was one of the ten poorest countries in Africa. Since then Botswana has faced a relatively rapid economic growth, which has made the country referred to as “The Sunshine Story of Africa”. The vast development has been possible thanks to stability in both the macro economical and the political sector, as well as due to the great diamond deposits, discovered only a few years after independence. However, the diamond resources will not last forever and the government is currently aiming to reduce the country’s dependence on the diamond mines. In order to do this, promoting entrepreneurship is stressed as an efficient method. (Sikuka 2009; UNDP 2010)

However, the public view in Botswana is that it is difficult to start a business and hard to secure financing as banks do not loan to people without collateral. Botswana has less than two million inhabitants and the limited market size is an additional challenge.¹ How can potential entrepreneurs be encouraged to create ventures despite these difficulties? With focus on female entrepreneurs in Gaborone, this bachelor thesis aims to investigate how perceptions of entrepreneurial desirability and feasibility are created and the entailed implications will suggest how these aspects can be empowered.

Despite the diamond deposits coming to an end; promoting self-employment in general and female entrepreneurship in particular can be a way to enable Botswana’s sunshine story to continue.

2. Problem discussion

In order to encourage entrepreneurship, the Botswana government has initiated the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA) and the Local Enterprise Authority (LEA) to provide citizens with entrepreneurial funding and training. However, entrepreneurial employees and students are only willing to take the leap while seeing the venture as feasible and desirable. They must have the will as well as the belief in their personal capabilities to become entrepreneurs. Thus, to encourage economic development in the form of new enterprises, perceptions of feasibility and desirability must first be increased. Policy initiatives will increase business formations if those initiatives positively influence people’s attitudes and thus intentions. (Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud 2000)

Entrepreneurship is traditionally seen by the public as a male activity since men are in majority among the self-employed and the tasks the entrepreneur conducts are seen as masculine. (Holmquist 2002) To promote entrepreneurial activity it is essential not to leave the females out, for the aspect of economic development and diversification, as well as for the process of women’s empowerment. According to Hisrich and Bowen (1986) a lack of self-efficacy, which is closely linked to the perception of feasibility, is a major obstacle for the career development of potential female entrepreneurs. Ronstadt (1983) has studied individuals who decided against starting their own businesses and found family considerations and lack of role models as important factors.

¹ Pauline Gagoitseope Coordination operations officer at CEDA, interview April 22, 2010 & Jeffery Mogale Consultant Registration of Companies, interview April 14, 2010

Significantly fewer women role models exist in the entrepreneurial community. For some women, values ascribed to the entrepreneur will also conflict with conventional feminine values. (McNabb, McCoy, Northover & Weinreich 1993) Thus, entrepreneurship might be seen as less desirable from a female perspective. These circumstances make it interesting to further investigate how the perceived feasibility and desirability of an entrepreneurial career for women can be increased.

In Europe, vast initiatives are launched where current entrepreneurs are asked to serve as ambassadors and role models for entrepreneurs-to-be. The EU-Commission has initiated a European network of female entrepreneurial ambassadors within the frame of the program Entrepreneurship and Innovation (EIP). The EU-initiative is based on a model from Sweden where 880 female entrepreneurs have been selected to tour around the country, to hold lectures and to inspire other women to start their own ventures. (European Commission EU Sverige 2009) The great attention given to female role models in Europe has awakened our interest in examining if a corresponding strategy would be suitable and efficient also in Botswana. Could role models enable Botswana women to view entrepreneurship as a feasible and desirable career path? According to Wood and Bandura (1989) proficient role models convey effective strategies for managing situations and affect self-efficacy through a social comparison process.

Extensive research (Vroom 1964; Shapero & Sokol 1982; Shaver & Scott 1991; Praag & Cramer 2001; Segal, Borgia & Schoenfeld 2005) have examined the relationship between feasibility, desirability and entrepreneurship. Segal et al. (2005) concluded that perceived feasibility and net desirability significantly predicted self-employment intentions. Earlier research on the topic has mainly been conducted with a quantitative approach and focused on entrepreneurial intentions rather than action. According to Segal et al. (2005):

“a limitation of any survey research is the inability to ask follow-up questions and explore in more depth the reasoning behind any finding. Future research including qualitative interviews and/or focus group sessions could therefore provide rich explanatory information that could add value to the survey data.”

Based on this argumentation we have found it motivated to conduct a qualitative study with the general aim to gain a deeper understanding of how perceived feasibility and desirability are created and how they relate to entrepreneurship. Our specific focus is on the impact of role models, and since our sample group consists of female entrepreneurs, a gender perspective will impregnate the study.

3. Methodology

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how role models influence female entrepreneurs in Gaborone when they decide to start their own businesses. We will focus specifically on role models effect on perceived entrepreneurial desirability and entrepreneurial feasibility, which are evaluated to be important factors influencing the start-up decision. (Shapero & Sokol 1982) Hence, our research questions are:

-What makes female entrepreneurs in Gaborone perceive entrepreneurship as a desirable and feasible career choice?

-How do role models influence the perception of the desirability and feasibility of an entrepreneurial career for female entrepreneurs in Gaborone?

3.2 Research Method and Approach

3.2.1 Qualitative or Quantitative Method

In our study we aim to investigate *how* role models influence perceived entrepreneurial desirability and perceived entrepreneurial feasibility. We have evaluated the qualitative method to be the most suitable for answering our research questions, as it gives a wider perspective and a more complete understanding than a quantitative method. A qualitative strategy is considered to be superior in answering “How?” and “Why?” type of questions, while the quantitative implies analyses of numbers and statistics in order to answer questions as “How many?” and “How much?” (Strauss & Corbin 1990). The quantitative method provides the possibilities for the researcher to be more selective with the information and structure and control the research to a higher degree. (Holme & Solvang 1991) Choosing a strictly quantitative strategy for answering how role models affect the start of new enterprises could though result in important nuances and details not being captured. With the qualitative method a deeper understanding can be achieved and conclusions can be made with the help of examples. (Svenning 1999) As our research question is focused on exploring the specific attitudes of females in Gaborone, we evaluated that the quantitative method would not be suitable since it would not allow us to adjust our findings to the specific cultural context in Botswana; we needed the interviews both as a way of researching the link between desirability, feasibility and role models as well as to grasp the contextual factors affecting the answers of the informants; such as the lifestyle of our informants. A *triangulation* method strategy, where qualitative data is collected and analysed in order to complement the qualitative findings, could have been another relevant option. (Svenning 1999) However, due to time and capacity constraints a pure qualitative method will be used.

3.2.2 Deductive or Inductive Approach

Extensive research has been carried out trying to explain what makes potential entrepreneurs start new companies and the effect of role models has in many cases been included in the explanations. (Wood & Bandura 1989) No qualitative study had though been conducted focusing specifically on the influence of role models on perceived entrepreneurial desirability and perceived entrepreneurial feasibility. In order to investigate this phenomenon we have found it applicable to adjust and develop an already existing model, the Shapero Model. Hence, we are using the research approach *abduction*, a middle way between induction and deduction. Abduction allows the researchers to continuously adjust both the theoretical and empirical findings. The general goal with this research approach is to understand the underlying patterns associated with a specific phenomenon in a specific setting. (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008) This is in line with the objective of our study and *abduction* is consequently evaluated to be the most appropriate approach.

3.2.3 Exploratory, Explanatory or Descriptive Research

Research can be conducted as exploratory, explanatory or descriptive. (Kerlinger 1986) Exploratory research is devoted to becoming familiar with a topic. Explanatory research has the aim of finding relationships among variables from theory based expectations whereas descriptive research aims to describe a situation or context. (Malhotra & Grover 1998). Descriptive research is more specific and focused than exploratory research. The researcher starts with a well defined problem or research question and a clearly defined plan for collecting and analyzing data. (Burchinal 2010) Our study is based on the Shapero-model, and already from the beginning we had a clear plan for how to structure the work with the bachelor thesis. However, since we have a small sample size it is difficult to generalize our findings. Thus, the study is of an explorative nature. (Burchinal 2010) To further exemplify; an explorative study in a developing country could be to interview twenty women from Kuwait on their experiences during the Iraqi war and how the conflict shaped their roles in the society; whereas an example of a descriptive study in a developing country would be to conduct a survey with two hundred farm families in Iraq, on husband and wife-related decision making. Our study resembles the first examples; and is of an explorative nature although the study follows a predetermined structure. Buchinal (2010) further states that exploratory studies can provide valuable, even critical information for designing larger scale descriptive or explanatory studies.

3.2.4 Sample and Data Collection

Our sample consists of ten female entrepreneurs living and working in the Gaborone area. All of the sample entrepreneurs have formally registered their own enterprises. Micro-entrepreneurs, who have not registered a company but only obtained permits to run “walking businesses” have not been included in our sample. The reason for this is that the owner of a walking business is not allowed to open a shop or an office and thereby has very limited possibilities of expansion. Consequently, the factors making individuals perceive starting a walking business respectively a registered business as feasible and desirable are not corresponding.

In this paper, the words “sample entrepreneurs” and “informants” are used synonymously. When selecting our informants we have aimed to attain a wide diversity within the sample in order to obtain a sample representative of female entrepreneurs in Gaborone. Spector (1981) Accordingly, we have selected entrepreneurs of different ages (ranging from 26 to 47 years) and with different levels of education. Our entrepreneurs are active in different sectors; some traditionally dominated by males, such as manufacturing and transport businesses, and other traditionally dominated by females, such as fashion design and retailing. To obtain a diverse sample we have selected some informants who have been very successful with their enterprises and others who have been less successful. The sample entrepreneurs have between 0 to 80 employees. Many of the informants have received loans for financing their start-ups from the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA). However, some have not fulfilled the criterion of CEDA and others have not wanted to take loans and to avoid being indebted. We have not chosen the informants on basis of their family circumstances, it can though be worth noticing that the entrepreneurs have between 0 to 3 children and that the majority of them are unmarried.

In Botswana there are two main institutions that work with promoting entrepreneurship, CEDA and LEA. Where CEDA is responsible for funding; LEA acts as an advisor and runs workshops and courses for entrepreneurs-to-be. There is an overlap between the clients of the two institutions,

many individuals first register with LEA learning for example how to write a business plan before turning to CEDA for funding. Some individuals do not turn to LEA before applying for funds and some individuals who attend courses at LEA never obtain a business loan from CEDA. The reason for us to cooperate with CEDA before LEA is that CEDA has longer-term relationships with its clients. A portfolio manager at CEDA has a certain number of clients whom he or she visits regularly. Since our study relies on a small sample size, we needed to make conscious choices regarding whom to include in the sample and thus, we found CEDA to be an appropriate partner organization.

Why have we chosen a sample consisting of current entrepreneurs? Which other types of samples could alternatively have been chosen? Several studies on what promotes entrepreneurship have been made on business students about to make their career choice. (Scherer, Adams, Carley & Wiebe 1989; Krueger et al. 2000; Segal et al. 2005). As the sample groups have not consisted of current, but potential entrepreneurs, the focus has been mainly on entrepreneurial intentions. Even if intentions are shown to successfully predict behaviour (Kim & Hunter 1993), it is what drives the actual action to start a business that is of prime relevance. For this reason, we have chosen a sample group of established entrepreneurs and asked them about their perceptions during the start-up phase. Hence, our focus is on entrepreneurial action rather than intention, which entail our study to be retrospective. A weakness with the retrospective approach is that the informants might after-rationalize their answers regarding historical events. They might also have forgotten certain factors that influenced them at a previous point in time. To delimit this effect we have aimed to select entrepreneurs who have started their companies recently and we have set a time limit of maximum ten years from the venture creation.

With the objective to attain a broad understanding of the entrepreneurial climate in Botswana, as well as of the processes of starting a venture and the circumstances for female entrepreneurs, we have conducted three interviews with experts on these areas. Two of the interviews have been with employees at CEDA and one interview with an independent consultant aiding individuals to succeed with their applications at the Registration of Companies. The expert interviews have added value to our study by giving background information, which has helped us to put the answers from our sample entrepreneurs in a context.

3.2.5 Interview Design and Analysis

We initiated the thesis work by reading up on the relevant theory; thereafter we formulated questions aimed to exemplify the theoretical framework in the context of Botswana. We specifically tried to ensure that the questions were non-leading and that they would be concrete enough for informants from different educational levels to grasp. The interviews were semi-structured allowing us to follow up on interesting side-tracks. However; we used the same protocol for every interview, since having the same protocol enhances the reliability of the collected data. (Voss, Tsiriktsis & Frohlich 2002) In the end of the interviews with our sample entrepreneurs we showed them pictures of four potential role models: the first president of Botswana, *Sir Seretse Khama*; the media profile *Ophra Winfrey*; the founder of Microsoft, *Bill Gates* and the self-employed Batswana No.1 Lady Detective, *Mma Ramotswe*. (See Appendix 10.3) The aim of showing the pictures was to open up for a discussion regarding what made someone be, or not be, a role model. The discussions made our informants reason from partly new angles, not directed by our interview questions. We showed the pictures after asking all of our other questions, since the

photos of the potential role models could otherwise have affected the informants' associations and thereby their answers. The selection of the four potential role models was partly based on discussions with Batswana; where Oprah and Seretse Khama came up as examples of influential role models. Bill Gates was chosen since he is an icon in the west as a self-made man and the literary figure Mma Ramotswe since she is well known around the world as an entrepreneurial private detective.

To start with, we conducted a test-interview with a female entrepreneur and thereafter evaluated the questions ourselves as well as asked the informant for feedback regarding how she had perceived the questions and the interview situation. At all of the interviews we were both present, one posing the questions and focusing completely on the informant to be able to follow up on interesting leads as well as to clarify if needed; while the other one took notes. Leonard-Barton (1990) stresses the value of being two researchers who can challenge each others observations. Voss et. al (2000) further states that being two researchers can reduce the potential of personal bias. After each interview the person taking notes typed them and then we both reviewed the notes. Three of the informants we met through personal encounters. The other seven we came in contact with through the entrepreneurial financing organization CEDA. At several of the CEDA interviews (five out of seven) the entrepreneurs' contact person at CEDA was present to give us an introduction. The entrepreneurs often had contact with their contact person for several years, and their presence enabled the entrepreneurs to feel more comfortable however, the presence of CEDA personnel likely also biased the questions in a certain direction. Since we interviewed two experts from CEDA, as well as spent about a week at the CEDA-office, we were able to get a good grasp of the CEDA values. We were thereby able to filter the informants' answers when they for example stressed how important it was for a role model to be good at book keeping. The contact with CEDA added value to our study in several ways, since if we had sought out all entrepreneurs on our own there would likely have been a bias towards more educated, extroverted entrepreneurs with an interest in international affairs.

After having completed the interview phase, we compiled a document encompassing all the typed interview protocols. We thereafter individually went through the interviews looking for patterns and differences in the interview answers. After drawing individual conclusions we discussed our findings together and were thus able to fully utilize our joint creativity and minimize the influence of the personal bias. Straus & Corbin (1990) discuss that the overall goal of qualitative research is to find the big picture and understand phenomena better; through reviewing the interview protocols in the light of the knowledge we obtained from the expert interviews; we were able to create a focus in our analysis. According to Yin (2003) one way of increasing the validity of social science research is to let a key informant review a draft of the study. Thus, after having finished the analysis we called upon one of the sample entrepreneurs who reviewed the empirics/analysis-section. She confirmed that the conclusions we had drawn were accurate for the most part but clarified a few points; after her comments we made a few adjustments to the analysis-section.

3.3 Research quality

3.3.1 Validity

Validity is the ability to measure what we want to measure, the connection between theory and empirics. (Svenning 1999) Svenning further states that it is easier to achieve a high validity in qualitative than quantitative studies since qualitative research allows the researcher to observe people in their everyday lives and thus, obtain first hand knowledge of social life unfiltered through concepts and definitions. Validity comes in two forms; internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the generalization of conclusions within the study itself whereas external validity has to do with the ability to generalize the findings beyond the current study. (Yin 1994) In the case of our study; if we are able to correctly identify what makes the female entrepreneurs in Gaborone perceive entrepreneurship as a feasible and desirable career choice, then the study have a high internal validity. If what we identified also holds true for other female entrepreneurs in Gaborone who do not belong to our sample, then the external validity is high. Spector (1981) discusses some sources of invalidity. Since our study is retrospective, the past history of the entrepreneurs since start-up might have affected how they now perceive themselves while looking back at the time of launching their ventures. It is possible that for example an informant whose business is doing well might describe herself as more confident at the time of launch than she actually was. We have tried to address this by choosing subjects who have all started their companies in the last ten years. Since we were conducting a study with in-depth interviews; we needed to make a conscious choice of the sample entrepreneurs. The criterion used were performance and time since launch; as we choose entrepreneurs from different industries and with different educational background thus, trying to eliminate the possible selection bias. Moreover, since we actively sought out informants who had not been granted CEDA-loans; our sample represents a diverse number of different voices of female entrepreneurs in Gaborone. To increase the validity of the study we asked one of our informants to review the empirics/analysis-section, to make sure we had drawn accurate conclusions. Our findings should be generalizable also to other cities such as Francistown in Botswana. However, since our study is highly influenced by the cultural context in Botswana and since Botswana is a rather unique case in Southern Africa, with strong women and strong government institutions in place to support nascent entrepreneurs we do not find it likely that we could generalize the findings to other countries in southern Africa.

3.3.2 Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which a study's operations can be repeated, with the same results. (Yin 1994) All measurements are associated with errors, and it is the relative amount of error to the true score that is the equivalent of its reliability. (Spector 1981) We have tried to increase the reliability of our study through complementing the qualitative interviews with our sample entrepreneurs with three expert interviews. There is a risk that the responses from the informants get coloured by the presence of researchers and that they feel that they ought to provide a "right" answer rather than how they really feel. Thus, in order to make the informants feel comfortable as well as for practical reasons the interviews have been conducted in places where the informants feel at home, such as their offices and in a few cases their private homes. The presence of the CEDA personnel could increase the risk of bias responses however, the CEDA personnel makes frequent visits to their entrepreneurs and are well known by them. Moreover, the art of the questions were neutral since questions regarding attitude at start up and the informants' role

models hardly could be seen as something which could affect their future chances of further CEDA loans.

3.3.3 Delimitations

The main delimitation in our study is that the relationships we are looking at are difficult to isolate. For example while researching how role models affect the perceived desirability and feasibility of entrepreneurship through self-efficacy and specific desirability; it is possible that individuals with an already high level of self-efficacy are more active in seeking out mentors and role models that can affect them positively. Furthermore, that the study is done in a retrospective way is a delimitation since our informants might have forgotten how they really reasoned at the time of starting their company. Additionally, at half of the interviews conducted a contact person from the financing organization CEDA was present. The presence of CEDA-personnel is likely to bias some responses in a certain direction, however, we have tried to be observant of answers made to please the loan officers and filtered the information.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 The Entrepreneur

Schumpeter (1947) defines an entrepreneur as someone who organized resources in novel ways. More recent definitions of entrepreneurship have also stressed that the entrepreneur should bear economic risk (for example McClelland 1969.) Harwood (1982) criticizes too broad definitions of entrepreneurship, since he claims that too inclusive definitions grants casual factors related to entrepreneurship little meaning. However, he further states that the definition of entrepreneurship out of necessity needs to be adapted in less developed economies. Thus, we have defined an entrepreneur in Gaborone as someone who has registered a company. This implies a certain amount of economic risk and a possibility for further growth, and who manages and runs their own business. We have from the definition excluded so called “walking businesses,” that sell sweets and phone cards on the streets; since the type of permit they have obtained for running their businesses do not allow them to grow. Furthermore, we have not applied any type of innovation criteria since this type of criteria would not allow us to find a large enough number, if any sample entrepreneurs.

In our study we will utilize the terms entrepreneur and self-employed interchangeably. Moreover, the words company, enterprise, business and venture are used as synonyms.

4.2 Gender and Entrepreneurship

Why is it interesting to study entrepreneurship from a gender perspective? Entrepreneurship is according to Carin Holmquist (2002) seen by the public as a male activity since:

- a. being an entrepreneur requires great effort
- b. the tasks the entrepreneur conducts are seen as masculine, e.g. being a leader
- c. men are in majority among the self-employed

Then how does the public image of the entrepreneur as male affect women who aspire to enter the entrepreneurial profession? Holmquist (2002) states that a woman who becomes an entrepreneur has to choose between either adopting male norms that exist or bring in values or tasks from the “world of women” into the profession. (See figure 1.) Starting a business in a traditionally female dominated industry such as health care would be an example of the latter. Noteworthy is that the research of Holmquist is done with a Swedish empirical material. The components of women’s world, women entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurial world differ with contextual factors such as the country-specific culture. In order to obtain a more accurate picture of what influences the desirability and feasibility of an entrepreneurial career choice for women in Gaborone, we have explored some contextual and cultural factors in the section setting the scene. (6.)

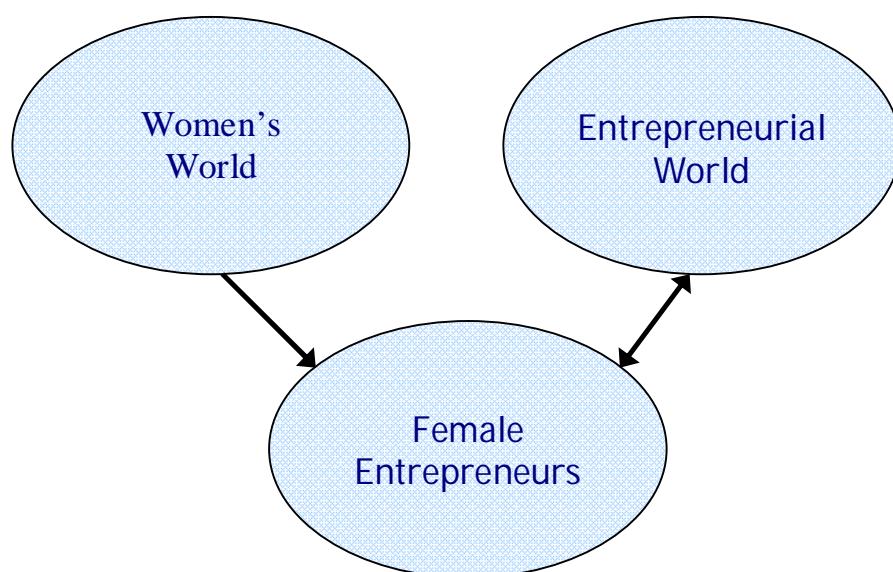


Figure 1. Female entrepreneurs in between the conventional worlds of women respectively entrepreneurship (Holmquist 2002)

Moreover, as far as personal characteristics goes, female and male entrepreneurs-to-be are equally risk-willing, hard-working and innovative. However, male entrepreneurs have a higher level of self-efficacy. (Krueger & Carsrud 1993) Ronstadt (1983) has studied individuals who decided not to start their own ventures and investigated the reasons behind these decisions. The findings showed that family considerations and lack of role models influenced strongly. (Ronstadt 1983) It is thus relevant for the context to mention that significantly fewer female than male role models exists in the entrepreneurial community. Many women as well experience values connected with entrepreneurship to be inconsistent with conventional feminine values. (MacNabb et al. 1993)

4.3 Role Models and Entrepreneurship

In this study role models will be defined as individuals who are influencing or inspiring entrepreneurs-to-be. Earlier research has indicated that role models do affect entrepreneurial intentions through attitudes such as self-efficacy. (Krueger & Carsrud 1993; Scherer et al. 1989)

Proficient role models convey effective strategies for managing situations, and they affect self-efficacy through a social comparison process (Wood & Bandura 1989). That is, people form judgments of their own capabilities by comparing themselves to others. Through observational learning, an individual estimates the relevant skills and behaviour used by a role model in performing a task, approximates the extent to which those skills are similar to his or her own and infers the amount of effort versus skill that would be required to reach the same results. (Gist & Mitchell 1992) Role modelling occurs when social behaviour is informally observed and then adopted by a learner who has learned by example rather than by direct experience (Bandura 1977).

The influence of observational learning through modelling on the development of self-efficacy beliefs may extend to mentor relationships in which the individual has the opportunity to work under the guidance and direction of a successful entrepreneur. Many of the functions of the mentor relationship may increase entrepreneurial self-efficacy, such as sponsorship, coaching, access to challenging work assignments, and access to important informal social networks through which information is exchanged. (Kram 1983) The concept of perceived desirability of a certain profession is shaped by the values a person possesses, the specific desirabilities. Role models can thus, shape the perception of how desirable entrepreneurship is through shaping the values of their mentee, Since parents are the strongest source of socialization (Scherer 1989) they influence the values of their children the most.

The contribution of observational learning to entrepreneurial self-efficacy is supported by research findings that show that entrepreneurs tend to have parents who were also self-employed (Bowen & Hisrich 1986; Mokry 1988; Scherer et al. 1989; Shapero & Sokol 1982). Research suggests that the presence of a parent entrepreneurial role model affects career expectations, education and training aspirations, as well as self-efficacy.

Scherer et al. (1989) have used Social Learning Theory to explain how parental role models influence entrepreneurial career preferences of their children. Scherer et al. (1989) conducted a quantitative study with a sample of 366 business students who were grouped according to the presence or absence of a parent entrepreneurial role model. The results showed that a role model perceived to be a high performer encouraged the observer, through a vicarious learning process, to consider an entrepreneurial career. (Scherer et al. 1989) In the study, 97% of the parent role models were male. However, only parents who had their own businesses were defined as entrepreneurial role models.

4.4 Shapero's Model of Entrepreneurial Intentions

Situational variables (for example employment status) and individual variables (for example personality traits) are poor predictors of entrepreneurial behaviour. In the psychological literature, intentions have proven to be the best predictor of planned behaviour. (Bird 1988; Katz & Gartner, 1988) Shapero (1982) has developed a model on what influences entrepreneurial intentions. (See figure 2) He claims that desirability, feasibility and a propensity to act are the most crucial factors influencing an individual's intention to start a venture. Moreover, specific desirabilities and perceived self-efficacy are described as important foundations for the perceptions of desirability respectively feasibility. Shapero's model has been tested further by other researchers; in a quantitative study Krueger & Carsrud (1993) found that perceived feasibility, perceived

desirability, and the propensity to act explained well over half the variance in intentions toward entrepreneurship. Feasibility perceptions impacted the most. In a more recent study Segal et al. (2005) developed the concept of net desirability, referring to the level of desirability of entering into entrepreneurship relative to the desirability of entering into organizational employment. Segal et al. concluded that perceived feasibility and net desirability significantly predicted self-employment intentions. Previously, Shapero's model has primarily been used for conducting quantitative research. In this paper we will use the concepts developed by Shapero and adjust his model to fit a qualitative approach. This will enable us to ask follow-up questions and in more depth explore the reasoning behind previous findings.

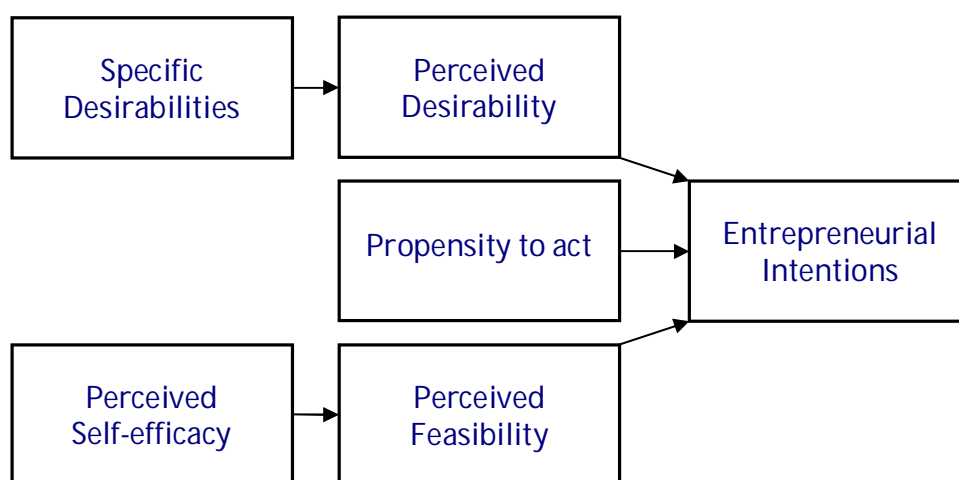


Figure 2. Shapero's Model of Entrepreneurial Intentions (Shapero 1982)

4.5 Perceptions of Desirability and Feasibility

In this section we will define the concepts of perceived desirability and feasibility and motivate why they are essential in order to understand why new businesses are initiated. Shapero and Sokol (1982) argue that both feasibility and desirability are necessary for people to pursue any entrepreneurial action:

“Human endeavours, especially complex activities such as new venture initiation, are a result of people's cognitive processes. Humans are able to think about possible future outcomes, decide which of these are most desirable, and whether it is feasible to pursue attaining these outcomes. It is not reasonable to expect people to pursue outcomes that they perceive to be either undesirable or unfeasible. “

Perceived desirability is the personal attractiveness of starting a business. Perceived feasibility is defined as a perceptual measure of personal capability with regard to new venture creation. (Shapero & Sokol 1982) A person with a high degree of perceived desirability will feel very enthusiastic about starting a company and highly value the benefits connected with running a business. The positive aspects of starting a company are evaluated to overshadow the negative sides. A person with a high degree of perceived feasibility will have a strong belief in that he/she

possesses the skills and abilities needed for starting a business. The personal capacity is evaluated to be sufficient to handle potential challenges.

Shaver and Scott (1991) have in their research on venture creation emphasized that new companies emerge because of deliberate choices made by individuals. They reason that feasibility and desirability are the immediate antecedents of choice and can be conceptualized with the questions:

-Can I do it? (i.e. feasibility).

-Do I want to it? (i.e. desirability).

The perceptions of feasibility and desirability necessarily interact and affect each others. If one concludes that the creation of a new venture is unfeasible, it will not be seen as desirable to start such a project. If one perceives starting a new business as undesirable, the feasibility aspect may not be relevant to evaluate. (Shapero & Sokol 1982) Perceived feasibility should be significantly linked to a measure of perceived self-efficacy. (Krueger & Dickson 1994) In this paper self-efficacy is suggested to be the main link between the influence of role models and perceived feasibility. What is seen as desirable can vary significantly between different individuals and depends on one's personal values. To investigate how a person's perceived desirability is affected it is first needed to evaluate what specific factors the person value a desirable. Hence, the influence of role models is linked to perceived desirability through the concept of specific desirability.

4.5.1 Perception of Self-efficacy

Related to feasibility, self-efficacy is a broader construct that also provides insight into the sources of efficacy judgments that subsequently influence behaviour and goal attainment. (Krueger & Carsrud 1993) Self-efficacy is defined as situational-specific self-confidence, and research shows that people who experience a high level of self-efficacy see it as more feasible that they will succeed with a venture and are thus, more likely to take action. Self-efficacy is an important attitude for an entrepreneur, since the entrepreneurial profession is one of constant hurdles. The highly self-efficacious attribute setbacks as "learning experiences," not personal "failure" (Bandura 1986; Seligman 1990). Bandura further states that self-efficacy is linked to initiating and persisting a behaviour under uncertainty, to setting higher goals, and reducing threat-rigidity and learned helplessness. A person's level of entrepreneurial self-efficacy can though be examined by assessing how they perceive problems and challenges, as well as by which goals they have with the business. Another factor revealing self-efficacy are to which extent a person believe himself/herself to possess the skills and abilities needed to be an entrepreneur. Focusing on female entrepreneurs, a gender aspect of self-efficacy is added. This aspect include if one see it as easier for men/women to succeed as entrepreneurs. Another indicator is the perception of ones capability to combine the role of being an entrepreneur with being a wife and/or a mother.

According to Bandura (1986) self-efficacy can be increased in four ways: enactive mastery (hands-on experience), social persuasion, physiological/ emotional arousal and vicarious learning, i.e. observational learning through for example role models.

Enactive mastery has shown to have the strongest direct effect on self-efficacy; being able to successfully manage challenges and set-backs enables the individual to perceive that they will be

able to handle problems in the future efficiently. (Bandura 1977) Observational learning has to do with comparing ones own capabilities and skills to them of a proficient role model. Observing a role model allow the individual both to learn how someone else handles challenges and problems, as well as to compare himself/herself to the role model. Could someone with my skill set handle problem in the same way as this person does? Social persuasion encompasses persuasive discussions and specific performance feedback. Someone who receives realistic and positive feedback will be more likely to exert greater effort. (Gist 1987) The credibility, trustworthiness and expertise of the person granting the feedback are also important in relation to how the feedback is valued. (Bandura 1977) Finally, individuals generally rely on an evaluation of their own physiological state while assessing their level of self-efficacy; for example a high anxiety level is associated with low appraisal of self-efficacy. Utilizing techniques of for example stress management can assist individuals to reach a higher perceived self-efficacy-level. (Gist 1987)

4.5.2 Specific Desirability

Specific desirability is connected to personal values and career choice; a person who highly values independence will be more likely to choose to be an entrepreneur if that person perceives entrepreneurship to be a career choice associated with an independent lifestyle. A career which entails ones preferred values will be seen as more desirable. (Krueger et. al 2000) Reynolds (1992) has identified three core values important to entrepreneurs; challenge, wealth and autonomy. In an exploratory study from 1996 Kolvereid has through an open-ended response approach generated six values which significantly characterized core values to self-employed from core values important to individuals in organizational employment. The self-employed wanted economic opportunity, challenge, autonomy, authority, self-realization and participation in the whole process; whereas the organizationally employed valued security, a limited work load, social environment, responsibility avoidance and career prospects.

5. Research Design

5.1 Our Model

Since entrepreneurial role models affect entrepreneurial behaviour through affecting desirability and feasibility, (Krueger 1993; Scherer et al. 1989) we have chosen to add the role model dimension to Shapero's model. We aim to explore through our qualitative interviews how role models influence the perception of feasibility and desirability for female entrepreneurs in the Botswana context. Using a sample of current entrepreneurs, we are able to focus on entrepreneurial actions instead of intentions.

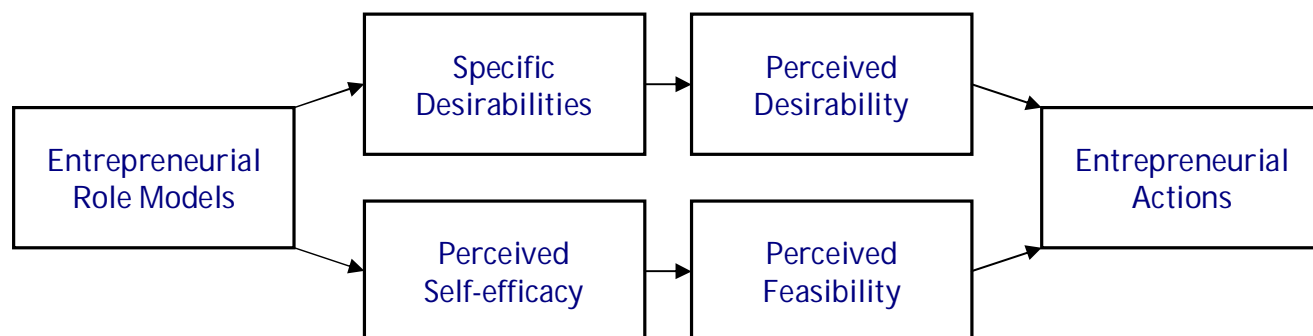


Figure 3. The influence of role models on entrepreneurial actions (Almqvist & Björnberg 2010)

5.2 Our Delimitations

Shapero's Model of Entrepreneurial Intentions (1982) includes the influencing factor *propensity to act*. Propensity to act is defined as a personal disposition to act on one's decisions. Since our sample consists of already accomplished entrepreneurs, we have decided not to further explore this factor. The entrepreneurial behaviour is already present, which suggests a propensity to act. An additional reason for this delimitation is that previous research does not support any relation between the propensity to act and role models. Hence, the propensity to act is not evaluated to be a relevant factor for answering our research questions.

The factors motivating entrepreneurship can be divided into two categories; push respectively pull factors. The push theory refers to negative external forces, such as difficulty in finding employment, which push individuals into entrepreneurship. The pull theory on the other hand suggests that individuals are attracted into entrepreneurial activities seeking independence, self-fulfillment, wealth, and other desirable outcomes. (Gilad and Levine 1986) In Botswana, the unemployment rate for women is high, 19.9% (UNDP 2009) and is thereby an essential push factor motivating self-employment. A push-method for increasing the number of entrepreneurs further would be to make the working conditions for government employees less attractive. In this paper we have decided to mainly focus on pull factors promoting entrepreneurship and delimit the study regarding push factors. A reason for this is that pull factors are evaluated to be more favourable to encourage. The crucial concepts in our research questions; role models and perceived desirability and feasibility, as well refers to the pull category. Furthermore, earlier research indicates that individuals become entrepreneurs primarily due to pull factors, rather than push factors. (Keeble et al. 1992; Orhan & Scott 2001)

6. Setting the scene

6.1 Terminology

The people in Botswana are called Batswana, one person from Botswana is called a Motswana.

6.2 Women's position in Botswana

In the traditional Botswana society women were responsible for the farming and men for the cattle. As boys were out at cattle posts, located far away from the villages, more girls than boys have gone to school. As a result, the illiteracy rate is today slightly higher for males. A little more than 50% of the students who are admitted to university are females; males though dominate at the institutions of natural science and engineering. Until 2005 the husband had custody over his wife. However, the law has now been changed and a married woman has the same rights as a man to e.g. own property and take a loan at a bank. The rate of marriages has decreased drastically in Botswana. In 1971 were 43% of all women older than 15 years married. Thirty years later, in 2001, the corresponding rate was only 18%. It is quite common for women to have children without being married and it is accepted in the Botswana society. As a consequence, many women bear the responsibility for the economic sustenance as well as for the children and household. (Enge Swartz 2006)

6.3 Entrepreneurship in Botswana

Today the Botswana economy is largely dependant on diamonds, the mines will not last forever, and the government is trying to diversify the economy through encouraging its citizens to consider an entrepreneurial path. (Sikuka 2009) Various organizations are working to promote entrepreneurship; Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA) is a government established agency which focuses on aiding citizen to found enterprises through providing loans at subsidized rates. CEDA also encompasses "Young Farmers Fund," which founds and trains youngsters who wish to have agricultural businesses. The Botswana government is particularly eager to increase the number of farmers since the country depends heavily on imports from South Africa. LEA, Local Enterprise Authority, offers training and advice to young people.

In Botswana there are around 25 000 small, micro and medium-sized entrepreneurs in the formal and informal sector. Many men start ventures in manufacturing, transports and construction whereas women are more actives in the food, health and service industry. Ms. Gagoitseope², a coordination operations officer at CEDA, states "*business is business, whether man and woman*" and says that there is a shift in society where the industries are less heterogeneous in terms of gender. Jeffery Mogale³, a consultant on aiding individuals who wants to register a company, states that the informal sector of micro enterprises in Botswana is very large. It is easy to set up a small table selling candy and phone cards. This type of business is called a walking business, and all that is needed to start one is to fill in a form and obtain a permit, the process is free. However, the process of registration of companies can be very slow and take between a month and up to a few years.

According to Mogale, university graduates and people with professional skills prefer to be employed, since then they can rely on a steady pay-check in the end of the month. Some people decide to be self-employed after having built certain skills in a work place, such as sales or

² Pauline Gagoitseope Coordination operations officer at CEDA, interview April 22, 2010

³ Jeffery Mogale Consultant Registration of Companies, interview April 14, 2010

marketing. Many Batswana especially women have a part-time company at the side of their employment. Traditionally an employment has been valued higher than self-employment in the Batswana society; this is the view of many parents of the working population.⁴

CEDA can not single out entrepreneurs as being best practice since they need to be fair to their members. Moreover, the threat of intellectual property theft in forms of strategies or best practices also make their entrepreneurs less willing to share their business secrets with the public or to serve as public role models. Ms. Sheleni, senior research officer at CEDA⁵, points out that the small market size in Botswana further adds to this tendency. Even when CEDA has granted its entrepreneurs mentors, there have been complaints that mentors have spread out strategies to other mentees. Thus, the employees at CEDA are mindful of whom the mentors are assigned to.

7. Empirical Findings and Analysis

7.1 The Perception of Desirability

Specific desirabilities will shape the notion of the perceived desirability of entrepreneurship as a potential career. Kolvereid in an article from 1996 generated six core values which characterised entrepreneurs. Thus, this part of the analysis/empirics will aim to explore the values of Batswana female entrepreneurs in Gaborone relying on the framework provided by Kolvereid.

Many of the informants were pointing out **salary or economic reasons** as their prime factor for choosing to be self-employed. *"I could make more profits, I got a low wage as an employee"* Even in the western world economic opportunity is one of the prime benefits associated with entrepreneurship. However, in the context of Botswana which is still a developing country, the material needs of the people is greater thus, explaining why economic empowerment is on top of the entrepreneurial agenda. Furthermore, many women in Botswana as well as most of our informants are the main caretakers of their families, granting them the responsibility to provide economic stability for their families. One informant expressed: *"When I grew up I wanted something to provide for me, but not necessarily a husband."*

Independence and choice would be the words our informants used to characterize what Kolvereid called **autonomy**. *"Lots of money, flexible hours, I could choose projects and staff."* One of the informants is pointing out that independence is the most important value to her both professionally and personally since dependence brings up abuse. Many Batswana women stay single although they are mothers, which might partly be explained by that they highly value independence. What Kolvereid calls authority, is by our informants described as being ones own boss.

"I did not want somebody else telling me what to do. Even in school I did not like when the teachers told me what to do. Because of that I was never even thinking about employment."

Looking at the concept of **authority** through gender-filtered glasses; authority in the sense of dominating over others would be seen as a more masculine form of benefit potentially derived

⁴ Jeffery Mogale Consultant Registration of Companies, interview April 14, 2010

⁵ Shelter Sheleni Senior research officer at CEDA, interview April 22 2010

from self-employment. Our entrepreneurs stressed the authority over themselves; or the lack of authoritative figures. **Challenges** can be in the form of competing and enjoying the art of trying to be better than ones competitor.

“(I wanted to) open a department store and then keep on improving. I am constantly trying something new though and every month I am checking out my competitors to see what they are doing.”

Furthermore, one of the respondents was describing it as she was a person who were easily bored and thus, needed to constantly meet challenges. The informant working in the manufacturing sector seemed to derive a great motivation from seeing her products materialize. However, other sample entrepreneurs describe the need to **participate in the whole process** as a burden. One of the informants explained that she must both be the secretary, the manager, the manufacturer and the sales person all at the same time, leaving little time for herself. **Self-realization** can from the responses generated be defined as professional or personal development. To develop oneself professionally and personally seemed to be one of the core values for the informants. *“I have always been motivated by passion and an interest for the beauty industry”*; *“(My goal was) to better my life, I wanted to see myself do something for myself”*; *“Personal development is very important to me, a business can’t grow if it does not reinvent itself, the customers needs to see changes.”*

Aspiring to develop themselves was a prevailing attitude both among the accomplished and the struggling entrepreneurs. Several of the informants used the phrase *“driven by passion”* to distinguish between entrepreneurs only wanting to make a living and those, like themselves, who aspired to grow their companies and develop themselves. Besides the values found in the study by Kolvereid, many of the respondents expressed values which we would like to characterize as **leadership**, they differ from the value of authority which more has to do with controlling resources and people, and from challenges which means to do better than others. The informants want to lead in industries, create new markets and they wish to give back to their community and also better the lives of other people. *“I want to be owning supermodels and owning the market. I want to prune young girls with low self-esteem and make them supermodels.”*; *“(My goal was to) give to the native people in Botswana when I succeeded.”*

Kolvereid (1996) is further discussing that the desirability of entering into entrepreneurship is relative to the desirability of entering into organizational employment. If the government raises minimum wages or increases the holiday periods; this will lead to that entrepreneurship is considered a less desirable option. In the interviews we conducted the informants were reflecting on the attractiveness of organizational employment and their chances of entering into organizations or government positions. A few of them had already held governmental employments previous to their entrepreneurial career and had concluded that the benefits were meagre and the chances for promotion slim. Some of the informants had endured long spells of unemployment; one informant was referring to being self-employed as a more secure option than being organizationally employed since she perceived that she could execute greater control of her own pay-check. The government of Botswana is trying to diversify the economy and encourage entrepreneurship. Thus, there are plenty of support initiatives in place, centres for funding and advice as well as specific grants to apply for. One of the informants is expressing her view on this; *“Honestly, I do not understand why not more people venture into entrepreneurship, everything needed is provided for.”* However, in order to get access to grants and benefits one needs a certain educational or

skills level, to find one's way through the bureaucracy. Thus, not everyone can access the benefits provided by the government.

Almost all of the informants do associate entrepreneurship with extremely hard work. They recognize that it is not possible to “knock off at five” like a regular employee, but rather that the business needs to be nursed like a baby. In addition, almost all of the informants state that it is a struggle combining motherhood and a business, a factor which could act discouraging since many women in Botswana are single mothers.

In conclusion, what makes female entrepreneurs in Gaborone perceive entrepreneurship as desirable? First, the informants in this study show a high degree of perceived desirability in relation to entrepreneurship, which was expected since they have already acted on their entrepreneurial intentions. Moreover, values which seem particularly important to them and have affected their choice of career are the potential to make money, personal development opportunities as well as the will to lead and to make positive changes in their communities. The need to participate in the whole process is sometimes seen as difficult since it increases the work burden on the entrepreneur. Further, an entrepreneurial career is associated with hard work and it is seen as a less attractive career choice to combine with family life.

7.2 The Perception of Feasibility

As all of our informants are entrepreneurs, they must all have perceived starting a business as feasible. Before taking the leap, they must have asked themselves the question “Can I do it?” and answered it “Yes!” or at least “Yes, probably”. Otherwise they would never have decided to implement their entrepreneurial intentions. (Shaver & Scott 1991) However, the degree of perceived feasibility can differ between entrepreneurs, as well as the means by which the perceptions were created. An individual with a high degree of perceived feasibility strongly believe that they possess the skills and abilities needed for starting a business. This relationship was confirmed by our informants when they described their thoughts during the start up phase. Some of the entrepreneurs explained that their confidence in success came from their earlier hands-on experiences, also defined as enactive mastery by Bandura (1986). This was i.e. the case for one of our sample entrepreneurs who started her company in 2004 with very limited resources but today has 80 people employed:

“When I started my company I was not uncertain, I knew I would succeed. I was an employee at a similar company before so I knew I hade the experience and the skills needed.”

Another informant quit her work for the government and started a wedding shop. She correspondingly expressed that her former work experiences had influenced her self-efficacy:

“I knew I was a hard worker and had an ability to work long hours. When I worked for the government I was sometimes decorating the Botswana defence headquarters when they wanted nice backgrounds for the president when he made speeches for TV. It made me feel very proud of my skills and I thought I would be able to use them for decorating an attractive and lucrative wedding shop”

Some informants expressed equal levels of certainty regarding entrepreneurial feasibility, but explained it by refereeing to their role models:

“I was 100% sure that I would succeed with my business, I never thought of failing. My confidence comes from my mother, through selling vegetables and sweets in the street; she earned money to build two houses.”

One entrepreneur, now well established with several employees, meant that it was her strict mother who pushed her to start the company *“I had no option, I was told to go out and make it”*. This exemplifies a kind of social persuasion, done through persuasive discussions. (Gist 1987) The fact that the informant’s mother strongly believed in her ability to succeed as an entrepreneur probably affected her own perception of feasibility positively.

As perceived feasibility is strongly linked to a measure of perceived self-efficacy (Krueger & Dickson 1994), it is relevant to investigate the self-efficacy aspect in more depth. The entrepreneurs’ levels of self-efficacy can be revealed through examine which goals they set with their companies, how they handled failures as well as if they perceived themselves to possess the skills and abilities needed for venture creation. (Bandura 1986) When starting their companies, three of the ten sample entrepreneurs had the aim to enter the international market and export their products. As the population of Botswana is less than two millions, someone dreaming of a great business empire needs to expand outside the national borders. Three informants had the objectives to develop their businesses within the borders of Botswana, but still have many employees. Some of the entrepreneurs wished to contribute to their communities by employing local people or donate money and food to the people of the Kalahari, a native minority group in Botswana. A couple of the entrepreneurs created their businesses with the main objective to provide a good living and security for themselves and their families. According to Bandura (1986) high entrepreneurial goals indicate a high degree of self-efficacy. The goals regarding international expansions can be seen as the ones connected to the highest perception of self-efficacy.

A clear sign of self-efficacy is to attribute setbacks as learning experiences instead of personal failures (Bandura 1986; Seligman 1990). Every one of our sample entrepreneurs expressed that they had faced problems when starting or running their businesses. Some of the informants had also previously started companies which went bankrupt or failed. The informants’ views of the challenges were though very similar; they did not let the problems bring them down but tried to handle them with the resources available. The majority of the entrepreneurs thought that they had learned a lot from the set backs. One of our informants, who had changed sectors from running a hair saloon to starting a shoe manufacturing enterprise, reasoned as follow:

“While starting a company there is always a risk, either you win or you loose. Abraham Lincoln tried to be president many times before he succeeded. He did not quit. You fall, you rise again. I try the things I want to do and sometimes they work, sometimes they don’t, but I do not see it as failure.”

An entrepreneur working in the horticulture sector described how she proceeded with her work, despite her cabbage field being ruined:

“I have faced a lot of problems with my business, last year all of my cabbage plants were destroyed by pest. Still I wake up every morning and go to work, I did not say I failed, I have just learned a lot.”

An essential aspect of self-efficacy is to which extent an individual believe himself/herself to possess the skills and abilities required for starting a venture. Most of our informants considered themselves to posses all of these skills and abilities, or at least the most important of them. The

entrepreneur working as a fashion designer had realised this by comparing her results with classmates and competitors:

“When I compare my work with the work of my competitors in Gaborone I can see that what I have done is better, regarding neatness, creativity and deliverance in time I have the skill for this business; I know what I am doing. When I studied for a diploma in Fashion Design I was the best in my class at doing patterns and I was perfect in sewing. For other tasks I can hire somebody.”

Three out of the ten entrepreneurs did not perceive themselves to have all of the skills needed when starting their companies. However, they were convinced that they had the ability to develop and learn. Sample entrepreneurs within the fields of poultry respectively piggery reasoned:

“I had the brain and I knew I could do it. When I started I didn’t know anything about chickens but I searched on the internet for the information I needed to succeed.”

“I did a good market research before starting the company but I didn’t really possess all skills needed. I keep on learning and for example go to workshops with LEA. There I even get the possibility to exchange knowledge with pig framers from other countries.”

How does being female affect our sample entrepreneurs’ perceptions of feasibility?

Entrepreneurship is by the public seen as a male activity as men are in majority among the self-employed and the media mainly portrait male entrepreneurs. In addition, the tasks an entrepreneur conducts are viewed as masculine. (Holmquist 2002) Approximately half of the informants reasoned that being a male or a female did not affect the feasibility of starting a company. *“For some people it’s easy and for some people it’s not. It depends on if you are a hard worker, not on your sex.”*; *“It is easy for both men and women to start their own businesses. You just have to dedicate your heart to what you are doing.”* In Botswana women have traditionally been responsible for farming, an activity that requires great effort. For that reason many women might have the perception that they are capable of working hard and do not avoid tasks requiring that. Even if women perceive themselves to have the skills and abilities needed for running a company, they might hesitate to take the leap because of expected reactions from people around them. Some of the informants have experienced that clients have not approached them as serious business partners because of their gender.

“It is more difficult for women to succeed as entrepreneurs; every client you approach will ask you for the owner of your company. When you say it is you they will give you a certain look. A look that means; Can I do business with a lady?”

Until 2005 the laws in Botswana gave husbands custody over their wives. (Enge Swartz 2006) As married women did not have the same possibilities to independently take bank loans, it was harder for them to start their own companies. Since the laws have now been changed, women have in theory equal opportunities as men to become entrepreneurs. However, the former laws have shaped the mind-set of the population, which is not as easily changed as the juridical paragraphs. A couple of the sample entrepreneurs mentioned that they think that their families and friends would have been more supportive in the start-up phase if they were males. One of the informants expressed that:

“I think people around me would have reacted differently when I started my company if I had been a man. They would have believed in it. People here always view ladies as the weaker sex.”

The generally published picture of a successful entrepreneur is one of a male. This could influence females to think that starting a venture is feasible primarily for men. Some of our informants though reasoned that the media picture said more about the magazines than about the true situation in Botswana:

“In most magazines in the county you almost only see men who are succeeding as entrepreneurs. But I don’t think that the magazines are really illustrating the reality in Botswana. When women are serious I think they can do even better than men.”

Being capable to see behind and criticise the media perspective in this way is a sign of high self-efficacy. More girls than boys have gone to school in Botswana, which could be a factor affecting females’ self-efficacy positively by giving them confidence in their intellectual capabilities. One entrepreneur running an accountant consultancy firm said self-assuredly: *“I would not mind competing head to head with a man in my line of business.”*

Our conclusions it thus, that by describing and exemplifying their goals, views of failure and perceptions of their own skills and abilities, all of our informants clearly show to be highly self-efficient. Their perceptions of self-efficacy have been created mainly by observational learning; they have seen others work hard and compared themselves with role models and competitors. Furthermore, their self-efficacy is evaluated to have increased by enactive mastery, as earlier corresponding hands-on experiences. This factor is though limited by the low age of many of the entrepreneurs. Our informants’ self-efficacy has in addition been affected by social persuasion and positive feedback from people in their surrounding. The conclusion that our sample entrepreneurs perceived a high degree of self-efficacy, and thus of entrepreneurial feasibility, was expected. However, it is a necessary foundation for our analysis regarding more elusive relationships regarding what created the perceptions and how role models influenced the processes.

7.3 Role Models

7.3.1 The Importance of Role Models

After having reviewed the interview protocols; we have found three categories of role models, who emerged from the interviews with our sample entrepreneurs. The categories are public figures, professional contacts and personal contacts. All of our sample entrepreneurs expressed that they considered it to be important to have role models. This opinion was shared independently of if the entrepreneurs had role models themselves or not. Only one of the entrepreneurs didn’t consider herself to have looked up to a role model during the start-up but reasoned that *“the presence of a role model would have made the process smoother and eased the struggle”*. Some of the informants meant that their intentions to start a business would not have been affected by a lack of role models, as they were driven by an inner passion for business. In contrary, a few of the questioned entrepreneurs perceived that their role models had been necessary prerequisites for their venture creations. The majority thought that they would still have become entrepreneurs but not progressed as quickly, one of the informants expressed it as:

“I had for a long time been thinking that I wanted to have a company, so eventually I think I would have stated one even without a role model. However my ex boss strengthened my belief that I could actually do it and I am not sure if I would yet have taken the step otherwise.”

Considering a person’s role models is not enough to judge if the person is going to be a future entrepreneur (Carsrud, Olm & Eddy 1987), as role models can as well inspire in the direction of other career choices or life paths. We have found that role models who are not entrepreneurs can due to specific characteristics inspire to entrepreneurship *“My mother was just a domestic worker but showed that everything was possible if you worked hard”*. Our study has not included the reverse relationship. However, most probably it works also the other way around which means that entrepreneurs can function as role models but not necessary encourage venture creation. Our findings though supports the theory that role models can indeed increase self-efficacy (Krueger et. al 1993; Scherer et al. 1989) and strengthen one’s belief in the ability to attain goals - a belief that is crucial for starting a new venture. Even if the presence or lack of strong role models is not sufficient information to predict entrepreneurial action, the importance of role models should not be underestimated. According to our informants, role models have in several cases been essential for taking step from entrepreneurial intentions to actual implementation.

7.3.2 Characteristics of a Role Model

From the in-depth interviews with our sample entrepreneurs, we have identified four main characteristics of their role models. The role models are to a large extent **accessible** and **inspiring**, they have a **good sense of moral**, and are **easy to identify with**. Furthermore, we have categorized the mentioned role models as public figures, professional contacts and personal contacts.

Many of the informants have expressed that a good role model needs to be accessible, have time to listen, give advices and support. The role model should not be selective and only help the ones from which he/she can gain personal advantages. One of the entrepreneurs stressed that *“A role model should have time for you and want to help you, no matter how uneducated or poor you are”*. Other informants considered a good role model to be *“someone who gives selflessly”*, *“someone who supports you and leads you in the right direction”* and *“someone who can always be there and help you”*. The accessibility need can not be fulfilled by a public figure, with whom one can only have one-way communication. Hence, a professional or public contact role model is required considering the accessibility dimension.

Being inspiring is another important characteristic of a role model. One informant described a good role model as *“Someone who sees abundance and takes away limitations and fear. A person who creates a new world where you feel that there is enough for everyone”*. Another entrepreneur simply put it as *“To be my role model you must inspire me!”* A person can inspire you no matter if you have a distant, a professional or a personal relationship. However, public figures are often well-known as they have achieved something extraordinary and this kind of role models are thus frequently mentioned as sources of inspiration.

A good sense of moral is highly valued. Our sample entrepreneurs wanted their own views of morality to be mirrored by their role models. An entrepreneur who rejected alcohol and tobacco expressed that the people she looks up to must do the same *“I admire people who don’t drink or*

smoke; only they can be my role models.” Honesty, unselfishness and reliability were other characteristics of the role models that our informants cherished. All kinds of role models can have a good sense of moral. The morality of professional and personal contacts might though be easier to control and evaluate.

The sample entrepreneurs mainly mentioned people who they could easily identify with as role models. To a large extent their role models were or had been in a similar position as themselves. Frequently mentioned were personal contacts and other entrepreneurs who had started with small resources but managed to make something great out of them. When we showed the entrepreneurs pictures of four famous people and asked if any of them could be seen as a role model, many mentioned Oprah Winfrey. They explained that she was a role model because of her family background, which in several aspects were similar to their own. *“She has struggled hard and see where she is now”* and *“She managed to make something out of nothing”* is a pair of the comments about Oprah’s achievements. More women than men were described as role models, which supports the importance of the identification aspect.

7.3.3 The Role Model as a Reflection of the Entrepreneur

Many informants describe a good role model as someone who is very similar to either how they describe themselves or how we perceived them. In some cases they seem highly aware of this fact such as in the following statements; *“I do not drink and smoke.....I admire people who also do not drink or smoke, they are my role models”*; *“(A good role model is) someone who is friendly and jolly and likes people...A radio reporter once told me that I was his role model, since he could see on my face that I was open, accessible and jolly.”* In other cases the entrepreneurs are less conscious of the fact that they share traits with the good role models they are describing; *“people that are open and inviting and see opportunities”* is cited from a very sociable sample entrepreneur from the manufacturing sector. *“A good role model is someone who has a wide network and who knows the business area.”* is expressed by a marketing professional. *“Someone who does not give up.”* is further cited from an entrepreneur struggling in establishing herself in the beauty industry. Potential reasons for the similarities between the informants and the good role models they are describing might be that the role models they have sought out are individuals they can identify with or that they are describing traits needed in their industry, an industry they have chosen due to their personality traits and values. One of the entrepreneurs, who is more established, states that she herself functions as a role model. *“I know other younger girls who are inspired by me.”*

7.3.4 The Influence of Public Figures

Public Figures are here defined as celebrities, politicians, media-profiles and famous business people, with whom the entrepreneurs have had no a direct relationship. The public figures make an impact through media such as television, radio, magazines and internet.

Several entrepreneurs are mentioning personal and professional development as something they hope to attain through entrepreneurship. Through observing public figures one can get ideas of how this should be done. *“Oprah! I learned a lot from her regarding the self-aspect. You need to start with yourself, love yourself and who you are, then comes the market.”*; *“Oprah Winfrey, I am always buying her magazine and I am inspired by the things she does and the hard work she puts into it.”* Professional development means to many of the entrepreneurs to conduct business with

good ethics, the piggery farmers discusses how she wants to take good care of her pigs, and keep them neat and well-fed, she also points out that some of the entrepreneurs she knows personally do not run their piggeries this way, her role models are entrepreneurs she has encountered in the media; *“I read about big local farmers in the paper and I like how they ran their farms.”* One explanation for her choice of role model is that it is easier to attach ethical behaviour to a person which one does not know personally, since their weak traits are unknown. The lady who runs a model agency strives to be both an industry leader, since the model industry as a business is not developed in Botswana, and a community leader through developing young ladies into super models. Through viewing the TV-show Top Model, starring the famous supermodel Tyra Banks, her entrepreneurial goal is shaped.

Sometimes public figures can increase the perception of feasibility by exemplifying how to conduct successful entrepreneurship. One informant is expressing; *“International designers that do online marketing (are my role models), I would like to see my shoes on the run-way or in the internet market”* Since the Botswana market is limited, this entrepreneur is seeing export as a way of growing her company. Furthermore, she is also looking to other designers to get ideas on how she would be able to reach the international market, through online marketing.

Public figures are also mentioned in contexts not related to entrepreneurship; but rather in relation to personal values that the informants strive to attain. One sample entrepreneur for example said: *“Mandela taught me to be strong and forgiving and never have an evil heart.”* Having public figures as role models seem to increase the desirability of entrepreneurship through giving the informants a sense of how they can be leaders and develop themselves personally and professionally through their entrepreneurial endeavours. The famous role models do also increase the sense of perceived feasibility of successful entrepreneurship since they show the informants that it is possible to attain high goals, as well as methods that can be used for reaching these.

7.3.5 The Influence of Professional Contacts

Professional contacts are here defined as colleagues, employers and other entrepreneurs, with whom the entrepreneurs have had a mainly work related relation. Professional contacts in many cases affect the informants view on what level of salary or which status symbols they potentially could have as entrepreneurs. *“Now they have their own studios at Riverwalk and African Mall (shopping malls in Gaborone)”*; *“One of the self-employed designers I know first drove a City Golf and now she has a really nice BMW.”* What we earlier could tell from assessing the benefits the entrepreneurs connected with running a company; materialistic factors, such as a good salary, were the most cited one. Thus, being able to see professional acquaintances consume luxury goods could highly increase the desirability of entrepreneurship. Other informants are pointing out that the entrepreneurs in their social circle showed them that entrepreneurship can lead to increased flexibility and independence. *“Being self-employed means choosing colleagues for projects and what staff one wants to work with.”*; *“She was owning a farm, she had something of her own, and she was independent”* However, not all entrepreneurial contacts increased the informants perception of the desirability of running an own venture. Some are pointing out that their acquaintances seem to act more out of necessity (push-factors) than to attain benefits. *“Most of them are doing their business for survival; they lack the passion for their trade.”* Another informant is mentioning that other entrepreneurs do not share her values: *“I did not think they fed their pigs well I wanted mine to look nice.”* Nevertheless, recognizing that other entrepreneurs do

not operate out of the same value system seems to function as a motivational factor for the entrepreneurs. They attribute others lack of success to them not adhering to the same values.

Interacting with the entrepreneurial community can help increase ones self-efficacy in many different ways. First, let us divide the role models into peers and mentors, where peers are people around the same age and same status-level while mentors are people such as managers who are generally older and more experienced. Peers can help to increase the perceived level of self-efficacy in several ways, one is through network support. A couple of the informants belonged to clusters of entrepreneur in their own industry and mentioned that they thus were able to cooperate, share challenges and as well as add value to each others companies through consulting upon each other. The learning process of interacting with other entrepreneurs is also emphasised upon; *“He had the skills I needed, he gave me material to start and taught me the skills, although he was already in the business and I would be his competitor”* Having contact with peers also leads to a social comparison process which can increase ones level of self-efficacy; *“As she was a woman like me and even younger, I thought, if she can do it, so can I.”* Mentors can be used for observational learning that is, seeing how someone who does well manages a company increases ones belief in ones ability to do the same thing. *“I used the experience from my ex-boss; he told me that customers are the most important along with drivers and receptionists.”* Moreover, mentors can also increase a person’s sense of self-efficacy through giving praise and enable their mentee to meet challenges in the workplace. *“My ex-boss believed that I could actually do it.”*

Most of our informants do not themselves describe the entrepreneurs in their network as role models: *“A good role model is someone who inspires you, I was not inspired by other designers from outside but from my mother”* A few of them did though, when the entrepreneur was in a higher status position *“My former boss is my role model; I was always observing how she ran her company. She was very organized, a good manager and very persistent.”* While looking deeper into why not other entrepreneurs are seen as role models; we can evaluate the relationship according to the four categories characterizing role models; being inspiring, accessible and easy to identify with, as well as having a good sense of moral. Entrepreneurs in ones network will be accessible and often easy to identify with; however, not often exceptionally inspiring and as far as the morality aspect goes; our sample in a number of cases points out that other entrepreneurs do not have the same professional ethics as themselves. In conclusion, interacting with other entrepreneurs seems to increase desirability mainly through the perception of what status symbols one will be able to indulge in, it can also decrease the perceived desirability because of the hard work and lack of success the informant experience others to endure. Contacts with the entrepreneurial community seem to strongly influence the informants’ self-efficacy and thus feasibility of entrepreneurship through networking contacts, learning and social comparison opportunities. Having mentors enables the informants to practise observational learning and receive specific feedback on their skills and abilities to succeed as entrepreneurs.

7.3.6 The Influence of Personal Contacts

Personal contacts are here defined as friends, acquaintances, family members and relatives, with whom the entrepreneurs have had a mainly non-work related relation. Earlier research on has found that the family in general and parents in particular are especially likely to be role models since they are a major source of socialization for the child. (Scherer et al. 1989)

The concept of perceived desirability of a certain profession is shaped by the values a person possesses, the specific desirability. Since parents are the strongest source of socialization (Scherer 1989) they influence the values of their children the most. Many if not most of our informants described how they observed their mothers working hard; and without help from anyone else feeding their children and building up a better life economically. Having this background might dispose the females to recognize autonomy and independence as important values; and those are values often associated with an entrepreneurial career. One could also argue that there is a difference between independence as a career value and independently be able to provide for a family; which one could also manage through an organizational employment. However, many unskilled jobs in Botswana do not pay well enough for an individual to be able to solely provide for a family; rather they need to team up with an extended family to meet the cost of a household, thus we would still like to argue that there is a connection between the value of independence and an entrepreneurial career.

Our findings show that personal contacts to a great extent have influenced positively on the entrepreneurs' perceptions of feasibility. A clear pattern is that the majority of the informants described their mothers as role models, even though most of the mothers had not been entrepreneurs themselves. The role model mothers have affected their daughters' self-efficacy by social persuasion, giving positive feedback and hands-on support, as well as through observational learning. The informants have described the feedback and support they have got from their mother with quotations as:

"My mother gave me positive feedback on my potential to start a company. She told me I was a hard worker and knew what I wanted."

"My mother supported me and paid for my studies in South Africa, later on she left her house and moved to the village so that I could have my working studio here."

The mothers have in these cases by words and deeds showed that they believed in their daughters' abilities to succeed as entrepreneurs and thus increased their self-efficacy regarding venture creation. According to Bandura (1977), the credibility, trustworthiness and expertise of the person granting the feedback is important in relation to how the feedback is evaluated. As children in most cases know their mothers very well, it is easy for them to evaluate when the mothers are genuinely credible and trustworthy.

Through observational learning, a person estimates the relevant skills and behaviour used by a role model in performing a task. Capable role models affect self-efficacy since they convey effective strategies for managing situations (Wood & Bandura 1989). The sample entrepreneurs seem to have formed judgments of their own capabilities by comparing themselves to their role models. As they have found themselves possessing many of the same skills and abilities as their mothers, their perceptions of self-efficacy have been influenced by their mothers' achievements. The mothers described have in most cases not been entrepreneurs themselves. Nevertheless, they have been persistent, hard-working and good at solving problems, characteristics which are crucial also for successful entrepreneurs. *"My mother always worked to the end, she never gave up before she was finished"* Many of the mothers had experienced tough circumstances but still managed to reach their goals. This can be compared to an entrepreneur starting up with scarce resources, still managing to build a successful company. One informant exemplified the capabilities of her mother with saying; *"I have seen her doing the impossible; she earned money to buy a nice house through*

selling bananas". Many of the other informants had corresponding stories to tell about their mothers, one of them described her mother's struggle and success as follows:

"My mother had many hurdles but she came out successful. She had no education and couldn't even write her own name. She hadn't got a work and was divorced. She started as a maid and then saved up money to buy the vegetables she later sold to feed us. She went from homeless to building two houses."

Several of the entrepreneurs expressed that they through observational learning have learnt things useful for running their businesses.

"My mother built a home culture of good ethics. I am now doing the same at the work place, my employees know that I will always be there before them, thus they will not be late."

Our findings clearly show that mothers are the personal contacts who have influenced our informants the most. However, also other relatives and friends have affected the venue creations, primarily by encouraging feedback and discussions. One entrepreneur who started her company immediately after finishing school stressed the strong influence of a class mate: *"My friend Agata from school influenced me a lot, she helped me to think about the pros and cons of starting a company."*

One of our experts on entrepreneurship⁶ explained that an employment traditionally is valued higher than starting a company in Botswana. One generation back, parents normally wanted their children to get an education and then an employment, no other alternatives were really considered. *"The children have been brainwashed with: get an education and then an employment"* This attitude has now started to change as the number of entrepreneurs has increased and several of them have shown to be successful. However, a large part of the current working-aged population has grown up with hearing their parents tell them to be employed rather than self-employed.

Earlier research aiming to explain how parental role models influence entrepreneurial career preferences have mainly studied parent entrepreneurs. When Scherer et al. (1989) conducted a study on business students they found that 97% of the parent role models were men. As the study only defined parents who had their own businesses as entrepreneurial role models, many influential mothers were probably left out. Despite not being self-employed, the mothers might also have been role models affecting the venture creation. The research by Scherer et al. (1989) showed that a parental role model perceived to be a high performer encouraged the observer, through a vicarious learning process, to consider an entrepreneurial career. Our findings correspondingly suggest that a high performing parental role model can influence self-efficacy, and thereby entrepreneurial preferences. What is seen as high performing though needs to be evaluated with reference to the circumstances the role model has faced. In this context high performance can be defined as e.g. being uneducated and poor but despite that manage to save money to build a house. Furthermore, the high performance does not necessarily need to be connected to entrepreneurship.

⁶ Jeffery Mogale Consultant Registration of Companies, interview April 14, 2010

None of our sample entrepreneurs described their fathers as role models. This is vastly contradictory to the findings of Scherer et al. (1989). How can our results be understood and explained? One potential explanation is connected to the Botswana context, another to the identification aspect. In Gaborone, many children have grown up without a father present in the household and with a mother taking responsibility for supporting the family. (Enge Swartz 2006) This has resulted in the children seeing their mothers handling extensive workloads. The contact with the fathers might though not have been sufficient for observational learning and role modelling to take place. The easiness of identification is another potential reason for mothers being described as role models by their daughters. As all of our sample entrepreneurs were females and role models affect self-efficacy through a social comparison process, (Wood & Bandura 1989) the informants might have found it easier to compare themselves with other women, like their mothers. Many of the informants have expressed this view in different ways, as well as that a female role models are preferable to enable women to see how they can venture into entrepreneurship.

“I think it is positive to have role models of the same sex. If it is a female you can look at her and say; she did it, why shouldn't I be able to do the same.”

In conclusion, personal contacts in general and mothers in particular, are to a high extent pointed out as role models by our informants. An explanation for this is that mothers are prospective to fulfil all of the criterion found to be important for being a role model. Except being easy to identify with they are often accessible, inspiring and perceived to have a good sense of moral. They are accessible as they most often live in the same household as their children and inspirational if they manage to achieve their objective. As parents are a major source of socialization for the children (Scherer et al. 1989) they are consequently very influential in forming their childrens' sense of morality. Hence, many daughters might develop values similar to their mothers and thereby perceive that their mothers possess the right morality. The praise and feedback given by mothers are in addition often seen as genuine and trustworthy. The aspects discussed above explain why mothers can be role models promoting entrepreneurial action, even if the mothers are not self-employed themselves.

7.4 Feasibility, Desirability and Family Considerations

Family consideration has shown to be a significant reason for people choosing not to become entrepreneurs. (Ronstadt 1993) In Botswana, people usually have close contact with their extended families and elderly people often stay together with their children and their grandchildren. The extended family can help to facilitate the daily life but it also require extra time and care. In this section about family consideration we will though mainly focus on our sample entrepreneurs' thoughts regarding being mothers and how it influences perceived feasibility and desirability. All of our informants mothers or not, shared the view that it is hard to combine motherhood and entrepreneurship.

In the Botswana society women are in most cases the main caretakers for their children. (Enge Swartz 2006) One of our sample entrepreneurs described her view on the different gender roles; *“A man does not look back and say I have a family and house to take care of, he leaves that to his wife.”* This suggests that mainly women are constrained from entrepreneurship due to family

considerations. Half of our sample entrepreneurs did not have any children, the informants who were mothers had from one to three children. The average number of children for a Botswana woman is 2.9 (Unicef 2008); our sample entrepreneurs have fewer children than the average. One of the informants who had a daughter expressed that she was lacking time for all of her commitments:

“It is not easy. I have one daughter who is eleven years old, she needs time and my enterprise needs time. I also try to get time for myself once in a while.”

Another informant, who was running a large scale business together with her husband, saw a nanny as necessary to handle the situation:

“It is difficult to combine (a family and an enterprise). I have two children, five and twelve years old and they stay with me and my husband. We get help from a nanny. You can't run a business without help from a nanny! You have to communicate a lot with your children to make them understand, if they are not happy the situation can be very difficult”

The informants who did not have children as well perceived that it would be hard to unite the roles of being a mother and an entrepreneur:

“I don't have a family but I think it would be hard to be a mother with this work as I never have free time for myself. I know another self-employed fashion designer who has children and she often complains that she doesn't have enough time”

“In the beginning a company is like a baby, you need to nurse it and take care of it”

Our findings indicate that being an entrepreneur is seen as less feasible if combined with taking care of children. As the perceptions of feasibility and desirability interact and affect each other, it will not be seen as desirable to start a project perceived as unfeasible. (Shapiro & Sokol 1982) Women might as well view it as undesirable to become entrepreneurs if they think it will entail a lack of time for their children.

According to Ronstadt (1983) a lack of role models strongly influences individuals who chose not to become self-employed. As there are significantly fewer entrepreneurial female than male role models, it might be more difficult for women to find entrepreneurs that they can identify with and look up to. This is suggested to be a reason for why many women experience that values connected with entrepreneurship is inconsistent with conventional feminine values and thus perceive an entrepreneurial career as less attractive. However, the majority of our sample entrepreneurs had female role models, who despite being entrepreneurs, showed that it was possible to combine many commitments and to achieve high goals by working hard. Consequently, we have not found a lack of female role models, but actual time constraints, to be the main reason why our informants considered entrepreneurship and children to be hard to combine.

In conclusion, being both a mother and an entrepreneur is perceived as hard by our sample entrepreneurs. A lack of female entrepreneurial role models is suggested to be a factor influencing the Botswana women's values and thus their evaluation of entrepreneurial desirability. However, the feasibility dimension is affected mainly by concrete time constraints, which would not be changed by more female entrepreneurs being promoted as role models.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Answering the Research Questions

In this section we will suggest answers to the posed research questions, based on our findings from interviews with female entrepreneurs and experts on entrepreneurship in Gaborone.

-What makes female entrepreneurs in Gaborone perceive entrepreneurship as a desirable and feasible career choice?

Entrepreneurship is seen as a desirable career choice since it allows the woman to influence the size of her pay-check; it further allows her to set her own goals and thus develop herself professionally and personally. Moreover, pursuing an entrepreneurial career is seen as a way of leadership, exploiting new market, giving work to fellow Batswana as well as to be able to give to charity, which are factors that motivates the women in Gaborone. The societal view of entrepreneurship and feminine values being inconsistent is an aspect that affects perceived desirability negatively. The self-employed females perceive entrepreneurship as feasible as their self-efficacy is affected by observational learning from role models and competitors. As well, their view on entrepreneurial feasibility is increased by enactive mastery and social persuasion, such as positive feedback from personal and professional contacts. Prejudices regarding women not being serious business partners, family considerations and time constraints are all aspects that make female entrepreneurs in Gaborone perceive self-employment as less feasible.

-How do role models influence the perception of the desirability and feasibility of an entrepreneurial career for female entrepreneurs in Gaborone?

Public figures function as sources of inspiration for the female entrepreneurs; they mainly influence the desirability of starting a venture. This is done through showing a dream picture of what one could achieve. The strongest example of a public figure as a role model is Oprah Winfrey, who through her TV shows and magazines reaches out to millions of people. The female entrepreneurs are also able to identify with her because of her rough upbringing and her schooling in South Africa. As earlier stated in the analysis of what makes entrepreneurship a desirable career choice, our informants highly valued community leadership and personal development opportunities, through looking at public figures they gain inspiration to how one can lead and develop oneself. Professional contacts reinforce the idea that self-employment means economic opportunities, through the status symbols such as cars or houses they possess. They also allow the entrepreneur-to-be to obtain a more realistic, but sometimes less desirable image of the career choice through the hard work and effort the aspiring entrepreneurs perceive their professional contacts to execute. Their professional network grants the females access to clients and advice thus, making an entrepreneurial path more feasible. Moreover, more senior or accomplished professional contacts so called mentors help to increase the females' sense of self-efficacy through positive feedback on their abilities and skills. The peers in ones professional network can be utilized as comparison objects and through comparing oneself to them in a favourable way the females conclude that an entrepreneurial venture would be feasible. Personal contacts have been described as role models to a high extent; where mothers are described as the most influential. Mothers can influence the desirability of entrepreneurship through socialising their daughters into adopting certain values. The perception of feasibility is affected by personal contacts as they often

are accessible and function as examples of that high goal can be achieved by hard work. The personal contacts are described as easy to identify with; if a task has shown to be feasible for a personal role model, a corresponding task is perceived as feasible also for the female entrepreneur. Furthermore, personal contacts who give positive feedback on the females' entrepreneurial potential are seen as a credible and trustworthy. Thus, their praise effectively increases the perception of feasibility. Noteworthy is that the personal contacts do not need to be self-employed themselves; they can still be role models affecting females' perceived desirability and feasibility, and hence promoting entrepreneurial action.

8.2 Implications for Practice

In this section we will suggest how our finding can be used for implications in practice. With the aim to encourage female entrepreneurship in Gaborone, we will discuss how perceived desirability and feasibility can be increased. Focusing on role models, we will as well evaluate which kinds of role models that should preferably be promoted and how this can be done.

How can perceived entrepreneurial desirability be increased?

Entrepreneurship might not be the right choice for everyone; all individuals might not have the preferences and drive to become entrepreneurs. Obviously, we do not suggest that all females in Gaborone should be self-employed; the perceived desirability of an entrepreneurial career for women could though be promoted. This could be done by showing more examples of successful female entrepreneurs in the media, having attained the outcomes found to be desired; such as wealth, personal and professional development, independence and a possibility to contribute to the community. The Batswana media, as well as influential public figures, could as well increase perceived desirability by influencing the public view of self-employed women. If being a female entrepreneur was generally seen as more admirable, associated with high status and consistent with feminine values, more women would consider starting their own enterprises.

How can perceived entrepreneurial feasibility be increased?

The perception of feasibility can be increased by empowering women's self-efficacy. The highly self-efficient perceive themselves to possess all of the skills and abilities needed to succeed as entrepreneurs. The women who have not reached this level of confidence can still believe in their abilities to learn. By providing opportunities for training and developing entrepreneurial skills the self-efficacy of potential female entrepreneurs can thus be affected positively. Training opportunities for industry specific knowledge as well as for general entrepreneurial skills are suggested to be valuable; mentorship programs can be very useful for especially the latter purpose. Agencies such as CEDA already have mentorship programs in place; however, those are criticized on the grounds of knowledge transfer. Thus, it might be advisable to try to team up aspiring entrepreneurs with mentors who are proficient in a field different from theirs. An aspect of self-efficacy is to consider setbacks to be learning experiences instead of failures. To encourage this view, Batswana television and magazines, as well as agencies supporting entrepreneurship, could show more examples of entrepreneurs who have faced many challenges but still been persistent and in the end succeeded. Also a failure can entail important experience; entrepreneurial self-efficacy is increased by enactive mastery. Moreover, females' perception of feasibility would be strengthened if the public was influenced to view women as more serious business partners. Family considerations and time constraints make female entrepreneurs perceive self-employment

as less feasible; by attaining more support from the fathers to their children and from their extended families these circumstances would be improved. To change the mind-set of a population is obviously not done easily, however it is necessary to work in this direction if entrepreneurship vigorously should be considered as a feasible alternative for more of the females in Gaborone.

Which kind of role models should be promoted? How can they be promoted?

Personal contacts have to a large extent been described as important and efficient role models, encouraging entrepreneurship; especially mothers strongly influence their daughters. It is worth noticing that the personal contacts do not need to be entrepreneurs themselves to be useful role models. However, it is not easy to promote more mothers to be role models with external initiatives, as the relationships are personal and within the family. As a complement or/and substitute for personal contacts as role models, professional contacts can be promoted through for example business networks and mentorship programs. The professional contacts can, similarly to personal contacts, have several of the characteristics shown to be important for models. They are often accessible and can be easy to identify with if they are active in the same business sectors or have experienced similar circumstances as the potential entrepreneurs. As well they can inspire by showing successful examples and giving positive feedback. Public figures as role models can neither provide the accessibility aspect, nor give personal feedback or advice. Nevertheless, capable public figures are important to promote as they often can influence a wide range of people and thereby to some extent affect public values; as well they can be highly inspiring and show potential female entrepreneurs that great things can be achieved.

8.3 Discussion

We have delimited our study to focus mainly on the influence from the pull factors perceived desirability, feasibility and role models, rather than to explore the push factors driving individuals into self-employment. Hence, it is worth noticing the high unemployment rate as a push-factor. Organizational jobs are scarce; especially for individuals without a university degree. Our informants could though have chosen different ways of sustaining themselves; staying in their villages living of crops and produce from their extended families, they could have decided to become micro entrepreneurs; selling sweets and phone cards like hundreds of other individuals in the streets of Gaborone; however, they did decide to aspire a little higher and our study aim to explore how they were influenced to make that choice.

The retrospective nature of our study might pose a danger to the validity of the same; since the responses of the informants on how they reasoned at start-up could be influenced by their history up until today. We have dealt with this through choosing only informants who have been launching their ventures in the last ten years. One could argue though that it would have been better to choose a shorter time span since start-up; why not find informants who have started their venture in the past two or three or even five years? Our reasoning behind the choice of time span went as follows; we wanted a broad selection of informants; as far as performance level, age and educational background. Narrowing down on the time span would have meant that we could not have relied on help from CEDA; since they did not have access to many female entrepreneurs who had launched in the past few years. Relying on only finding informants through networking would have induced a greater bias in the study. Due to our backgrounds we would have been inclined to find young, well-educated females residing in the city centre. Moreover, as our research questions

are posed in a present tense, our aim with the study is not to reflect upon what made women in Gaborone perceive entrepreneurship as desirable five years ago, but rather to through considering the past reflect upon implications for the future. Thus, since values are changing with time we considered it appropriate to have a broad range of sample entrepreneurs to better enable us to draw conclusions relevant for the future.

In order to increase entrepreneurial endeavours in Gaborone, Botswana, would it work to appoint female self-employed ambassadors to tour around the country promoting an entrepreneurial career corresponding to the European initiative? As stated earlier female entrepreneurs in Gaborone appreciate role models who are accessible, inspiring, have a sense of moral and are easy to identify with. An ambassador whom one only meets once or twice could be both inspiring and easy to identify with. However, it would be hard to evaluate the ambassadors' sense of moral and he or she would also not be accessible for further advice and discussions. In our analysis we further discuss that role models in many cases increase the self-efficacy of the entrepreneur-to-be through praising this person and being models for how challenges can be handled. Meeting an ambassador, appointed to be a role model, only a few times would not match this need. Instead; we think that professional networks who meets regularly; where women and men from different industries could meet and exchange ideas and advice would be a better forum for encouraging entrepreneurs.

To promote self-employment among women it is not only important to strengthen their personal perceptions of entrepreneurship as desirable and feasible; also the views of people around them are essential and influence the females' perceptions. Even if a woman think that she has the same abilities as a man to succeed as self employed, the feasibility dimension will be restricted if she will not be taken serious by her business partners due to her gender. Further, if the societal view is that a woman is controversially leaving feminine attributes by becoming an entrepreneur, the career choice will be seen as less desirable by many females. Thus, in order to encourage female entrepreneurs, capable role models should reach out not only to the women, but to the society as a whole. Moreover, time constrains from several responsibilities make it difficult for women to combine being both mothers and entrepreneurs. A role model appointed to be an example of that it is possible to handle all the commitments would not be very helpful if the actual situation for female entrepreneurs is not sustainable. Hence, to increase perceived feasibility for self-employed females in Gaborone, male role models could be promoted, showing how to combine traditional African masculine values with sharing responsibility for family and household.

8.4 Future Research

One of the conclusions of our study is that strong role models, who are not entrepreneurs themselves still increase the feasibility and desirability of an entrepreneurial career through fostering and encouraging certain values and enabling their mentees to utilize observational learning regarding how to handle challenges. This relationship however, is probably not exclusive for an entrepreneurial career rather having strong, supportive role models increase a person's senses of self-efficacy and thus, enables this person to reach a higher performance level also in organizational employment. The relationship between strong, non-entrepreneurial role models and an entrepreneurial career choice would be interesting to explore further.

What was striking while conducting the interviews with our informants was the lack of husbands and their general attitude towards men. The relationship between the sexes in Botswana seems to be very tense. The society is in a transition period; where especially the men are caught in between traditional and modern values. The marriage rate has decreased drastically in recent years and the majority of women in Botswana today are single. Thus, leaving the next generation of young men without father figures; and consequently without personal role models for how to combine a career and family. Thus, an important area of further research would be to look at the role models of the new generation of boys and young men; since they will together with the young women grow up and shape the changing society in Botswana. To make entrepreneurship perceived as more feasible and desirable among females, it is crucial that they do not have to handle the dual responsibilities for their families and businesses by themselves.

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9.2 Interviews

Experts

Gagoitsepe, Pauline. Coordination operations officer at CEDA, 22-04-2010

Mogale, Jeffery. Consultant on the Registraion of Companies, 14-04-2010

Sheleni, Shelter. Senior research officer at CEDA, 22-04-2010

Sample Entrepreneurs

Baebele, Letto. Madsin Piggery, 26-04-2010

Caboitao Lelwe, Debbie. Fab Sketch Modelling CO, 29-04-2010

Kwape, Daphne. Thada Bridal Couture, 15-04-2010

Mangwa, Beitumelo. Mangwa Competitive, 27-04-2010

Manyaapelo, Masego. Pulse Media, 15-04-2010

Masu Jalal, Neo. Tshimologo Business Service, 28-04-2010

Matlapeng, Lesedi. Seddy –Sensational Body Wear, 28-04-2010

Moasis, Akanyang. Eddie’s Chicks, 27-04-2010

Raditladi, Semakalene. Anton Heir Designers, 27-04-2010

Simakane, Joy. Extramile Express, 30-04-2010

10. Appendix

10.1 Presentation of Sample Entrepreneurs



Akanyang Moaisis, 28 years

Educational background: Cambridge (12 years) and courses in Teaching

Company: Eddie's Chicks, Founded 2008

Business idea: Buy day old chickens, keep for 6 weeks and then slaughter and sell



Lesedi Matlapeng, 32 years

Educational background: Cambridge (12 years) and diploma in Fashion Design from South Africa

Company: Seddy – Sensational Body Wear, Founded 2004

Business idea: Do designing, patterns and sewing according to customers' needs



Neo Masu Jalal, 36 years

Educational background: Cambridge (12 years) and diploma in Accounting

Company: Tshimologo Business Service, Founded 2000

Business idea: To provide business consultancy & training



Semakalene Raditladi, 33 years

Educational background: Cambridge (12 years) and diploma in Marketing from Ireland

Company: Anton Heir Designers, Founded 2006

Business idea: Design and manufacture leather goods, such as shoes, bags and belts



Daphne Kwape, 47 years

Educational background: Cambridge (12 years) and diploma in Computer Science from England

Company: Thada Bridal Couture, Founded 2003

Business idea: Rent dresses and sell associates to for weddings



Beitumelo Mangwa, 37 years

Educational background: 9 years of schooling

Company: Mangwa Competitive, Founded 2008

Business idea: Grow and sell crops, such as Chinese cabbage, tomatoes, green pepper and watermelon



Joy Simakane, 36 years

Educational background: 9 years of schooling

Company: Extramile Express, Founded 2004

Business idea: Customs consulting and clearing, warehousing and messenger delivery services



Masego Manyapelo, 26 years

Educational background: Cambridge (12 years) and Degree in business info systems

Company: Pulse Media, Founded 2008

Business idea: Work with innovative marketing and events



Debbie Caboitao Lelwe, 40 years

Educational background: Cambridge (12 years)

Company: Fab Sketch Modelling CO, Founded 2007

Business idea: Modelling agency, connecting models and companies



Letto Baebele, 36 years

Educational background: Cambridge (12 years)

Company: Madsin Piggery, Founded 2009

Business idea: Breeds pig and sell them to slaughter when they are 5 months old

10.2 Interview Questions for Female Entrepreneurs

Background:

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- What is your educational background?
- When did you start your company?
- What is the name of your company?
- What is your business idea?
- What was the goal of starting a company?

The view of entrepreneurship:

- Please describe your view of a typical entrepreneur? (regarding gender, income, clothes, lifestyle, life-work balance, personality traits etc.)
- When you started your company;
- Did you want to be like this?
- Did you think you had the ability to be like this?
- Did you think being an entrepreneur would require great effort?
- How did people around you (family, friends, etc) react when you started your company?
- Do you think they would have reacted differently if you were a man?

The Perception of Desirability:

- What made you start your company?
- What did you do before starting your company?
- What benefits did you perceive with being an entrepreneur?
- Do you think male and female entrepreneurs experience/value the same benefits?
- What factors are important for you in a professional career? What do you value the most?
- Which of these do you think is more achievable as an entrepreneur than as an employee?

The Perception of Feasibility:

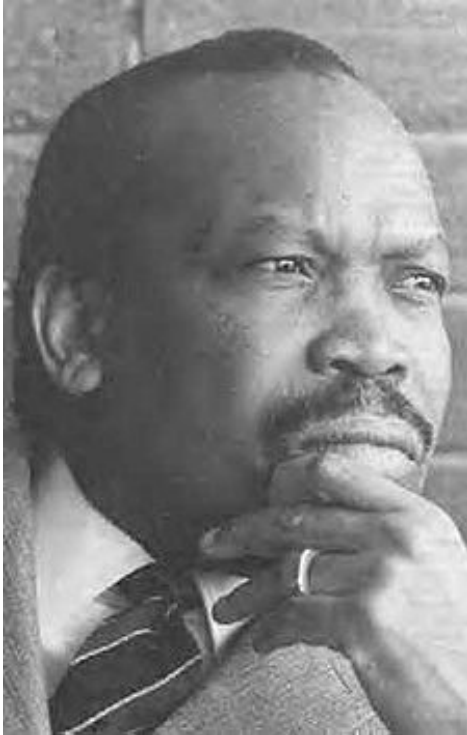
- Which skills/abilities do you think is important for an entrepreneur to have?
- Did you believe yourself to possess some of these skills/abilities?
- When you started your company, with which probability did you think your company would be successful?
- What challenges did you face when you started your company?
- How did you handle them? Have you learned anything from them?
- As self-employed, how much control did you think you would have over the situation?
- Do you think it is easier for a man/woman to become an entrepreneur? Why?
- Do you think it is easier for a man/woman to succeed as an entrepreneur? Why?
- Do you think being an entrepreneur is easily combined with being a wife and a mother?

The influence of Role models:

- Where there any people that affected your decision to start your company?
- How did they influence you?
- When you started your company, did you know any other entrepreneurs?
- During the start-up phase, which kind of contact did you have with these people?

- How did you perceive them? What did you think about what they were doing?
- Did you perceive any similarities between yourself and these people?
- Which family situations did they have?
- Did these people possess any personality traits or lifestyle which you wanted?
- Did they influence your view on how hard/easy it would be to start a company?
- Did they seem to have the things you value in a professional career?
- Did any famous people influence you in the venture creation? How?
- Would you describe any of the people you have mentioned as a role model?
- Did you use your role models while solving problems in the business initiation stage? -Could you give an example of this?
- Did your role model give you any positive feedback on your potential ability to start a business? -What kind of feedback?
- Do you think it's important to have role models? Why? / Why not?
- If you didn't have any role models, do you think your intention to start your own business would have been different?
- What is a good role model?
- Is it equally good/better/less good to have a role model of the opposite sex?
- What in your opinion would help increase the number of female entrepreneurs?

10.3 Pictures of Potential Role Models



Sir Seretse Khama



Ophra Winfrey



Bill Gates



The No. 1 Lady Detective

10.4 Interview Questions for Experts

- Could you tell us briefly about your work?
- How would you describe the view of Entrepreneurship in Botswana?
- How would you describe the view of Female Entrepreneurs in Botswana?
- Which do you think is the main reasons for females to start their own companies?
- How is a female entrepreneur seen by the society?
- Do you think it's seen as desirable for a woman to be an entrepreneur?
- Do you think women in Botswana in general believe in their capability of starting and running their own businesses?
- Are there any strong/well-known female entrepreneur role models in Botswana that you know about?
- What in your opinion would help increase the number of young female entrepreneurs?