

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Female music entrepreneurs' use of international social capital and digital technology

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Abstract

Music entrepreneurs are by nature intrinsically involved in the music industry due to lifestyle and business reasons. This study investigates the use of lifestyle entrepreneurship behaviours by taking a gender perspective about how music entrepreneurs develop commercial activities. This includes focusing on how international relationships relate to meaningful music entrepreneurial experience based on the use of social capital. Drawing on interview data from 12 female music entrepreneurs the findings highlight lifestyle identification responses to entrepreneurship as central constituents. Moreover, the study shows how female music entrepreneurs tap into their lifestyle connections based on their gender and social interests. The article contributes to the development of the music, gender, lifestyle, and digital entrepreneurship work by identifying a more interdisciplinary perspective. The practical implications for the music industry evolve around helping more female entrepreneurs break into the sector by harnessing their creative potential.

Keywords: digital entrepreneurship; digitalization; female entrepreneurship; gender; internationalization; lifestyle entrepreneurship; lifestyle work; music entrepreneurship

Introduction

Music is a cultural phenomenon that evokes emotions and inspires listeners but despite the altruistic benefits of music in spreading joy it often is a business activity (Chin, Marasini, & Lee, 2023). Pizzolitto (2023: 1439) states that 'music is the background of life representing an international language that connects different cultures' (Pizzolitto, 2023: 1439). Increasingly musicians are seeking to internationalize their activities by entering into business agreements that are based on digital services (Darvish & Bick, 2024). This is due to the consumption of musical products and services rising particularly those consumed in a digital format (Daskalopoulou & Skandalis, 2019). At the same time, other products related to music such as apps, games, and television shows has increased (Eusterbrock, 2023). To take advantage of these changes, musicians now operate in a chaotic and uncertain business environment that is often characterized by entrepreneurial activity (Chalmers, Matthews, & Hyslop, 2021). The entrepreneurial activities in the music industry comprise various stakeholders including musicians, educational activities, and promoters (Darmer, 2008). These stakeholders enable musicians to now consider additional sources of revenue and activities, which was especially evident in the COVID-19 pandemic when innovative sources of revenue were needed (Kiresci, 2023).

Music entrepreneurship is centred around the concept of value creation that combines economic and social objectives (Coulson, 2012). Haynes and Marshall (2018: 467) states that 'changes within the music industry specifically and the creative industries more broadly, are often interpreted as generating increasing levels of entrepreneurial consciousness among creative practitioners'. Musicians are

continually involved in different forms of entrepreneurial activity that can include developing new business ventures, obtaining new funding arrangements, and collaborating with partners (Kubacki & Croft, 2005). Often musicians need to network in order to obtain concerts and tours that involve major undertakings and entrepreneurial activity (Ratten, 2023a). This means they are strategizing by developing contacts and negotiating with various stakeholders who can include booking agents, publishers, promoters, and press agents (Johansson, 2012). In the competitive marketplace, they need to promote their music as well as invent new things to sell, which means they are involved in complex entrepreneurial activities that require time and effort (Martínez-Cañas, Ruiz-Palomino, & Del Pozo-rubio, 2012). Many of these activities are considered normal and part of a being a musician in the global business marketplace (Negus, 1999).

Despite the evident entrepreneurial nature of the music industry, less is known from a gender perspective about how female music entrepreneurs collaborate and build business ventures, which is the aim of this study. Brogan and Dooley (2024) found that social capital is helpful in empowering women entrepreneurs particularly those in the creative industries. Digitalization enables opportunities to entrepreneurs to focus on international markets as part of their growth and equalizes in a way the playing field. This supports the assertion by Skålén and Gummerus (2023) that digitalization is a form of service innovation in the music market. The main objective of this study is to clarify whether the gender of music entrepreneurs influences their collaborative efforts and to find out more about the impact on lifestyle entrepreneurship. This is particularly relevant as more government policy and social interest focuses on gender equality particularly in terms of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. At the moment there is a gap in the music entrepreneurship literature in terms of taking an interdisciplinary focus of looking at gender, digital, and international forms of entrepreneurship. Turchet (2023) stated that the music industry is now considered as a musical metaverse so requires new forms of study. This study addresses the gap by discussing the sentiments and feelings of female music entrepreneurs and how they use international social capital and digital technology. To do this in-depth interviews are utilized as the main methodology in order to describe female entrepreneurs feelings. The key findings from the study are that more female music entrepreneurs need to utilize their international social networks in order to facilitate internationalization. By tapping into government and other educational programmes regarding building a business they are likely to be more successful.

This article is structured as follows. First, we present the theoretical framework of the study by discussing the literature on music, lifestyle, and female entrepreneurship. Second, we state the methods used to obtain our research goals that leads to a discussion of the findings. Finally, the results are synthesized into implications and concluding remarks regarding the main limitations and contributions of the study.

Literature review

Lifestyle entrepreneurship

Traditionally, entrepreneurship has been associated with financial gain and pursuing economic growth (Aggestam, 2007). This meant a focus on business forms of entrepreneurial activity that focused on creativity and innovation. The music industry attracts entrepreneurs who are motivated to start their own music ventures that are often based on lifestyle aspirations (Cox Edmondson, 2008). This means they are seeking business activities that can be linked to their lifestyle. De Reizabal and Benito Gómez (2020) found that music entrepreneurs blend their lifestyle with entrepreneurial intentions. Lifestyle entrepreneurs exhibit a unique need to support their lifestyle with entrepreneurship.

Lifestyle entrepreneurs try to find business ventures that provide a particular type of lifestyle (Dias, Patuleia, Silva, Estêvão, & González-Rodríguez, 2022). Lifestyle is defined as the way people live and the values they identify with in their immediate environment. Lin et al. (Lin, Li, Wang, Jiang, & Zhu, 2024:2) define lifestyle as 'the interests, views, actions and behavioural orientations of an individual, group or culture along with overall life enjoyment'. Lifestyle entrepreneurs are working individuals

who prioritize lifestyle considerations over financial goals, which means they blur the boundary between public and private life as their business relates to their personal interests (Falter, 2024). Thus, they are involved in business activities that are beneficial to them and symbolically combine home and work life with traditional goals such as wealth creation not being as important as personal fulfilment. Lifestyle entrepreneurs seek out fun through business ventures, which means their own personal involvement in the work is a motivator (Ivanycheva, Schulze, Lundmark, & Chirico, 2024). Usually, lifestyle entrepreneurs tend to prefer sole owner operated businesses as it enables a better lifestyle. This is due to the creative freedom entrepreneurship can involve. Eikhof and Haunschild (2006) found that entrepreneurship can be a form of artistic expression via self-realized business activities.

Lifestyle entrepreneurship is a specific form of entrepreneurship that focuses on the way a person lives and the ethics they represent when engaged in entrepreneurial activity (Jones, Ratten, & Hayduk, 2020). It largely is used in the context of prioritizing non-financial goals, so they are more intrinsically motivated than other types of entrepreneurs. This can be done via activities they find rewarding or living in a specific enjoyable location. The goal of lifestyle entrepreneurs is to gain satisfaction from living an authentic business life, which can include freedom of expression and association in economic endeavours (Ratten, 2020). By integrating personal and business values they turn personal activities into professional pursuits. This enables them to pursue life choices and focus on meaningful activities. A key reason for being a lifestyle entrepreneur is to be involved in business that corresponds with their ethical and moral values (Schulte-Holthaus & Kuckertz, 2024). To do this lifestyle rather than conventional goals are highlighted as a way of prioritizing personal fulfilment. In the arts, craft and fashion sectors lifestyle entrepreneurship is a form of artistic expression, which means integrating self-expression through creative business pursuits.

International social capital

Social capital is defined as ‘the ability to secure resources by virtue of membership in social networks or larger social structures’ (Portes & Landolt, 2000: 532). The ability to find resources depends on a person’s focus and intent as people may have good social ties but still find it difficult to obtain resources. This is despite individuals having social, trustworthy, and well-established social ties. Cope, Jack, and Rose (2007) takes the view that social capital is essential to entrepreneurs obtaining successful outcomes from their business ventures. This is due to social capital influencing the intentions of individuals to become entrepreneurs (Elias, 2024).

Most conceptualizations of social capital when used by entrepreneurs tend to focus on the positive benefits in terms of financial performance and digital transformation but there are negative results as well (Ji, Miao, Wan, & Lin, 2024). This includes a reliance on the same people for sources of information that limits access to new people, which restricts the ability of people to network with others. This can lead to an unwillingness to change or adapt. Preferencing existing contacts can limit the social mobility of people, which means that cosy social ties can lead to misinformation and a lack of inquisitiveness. Estrin, Mickiewicz, and Stephan (2013) suggested that for entrepreneurship to occur there needs to be information facilitated through institutional exchanges by entrepreneurs.

Competitive individuals often utilize their networks in business activity. Trust and co-operation are essential in facilitating social capital. There is a complex and dynamic nature to social capital due to its fluid nature as requires bonding amongst individuals to build close relationships. This enables entrepreneurs to utilize their social capital in order to be connected without regard to priorities (Ferri, Deakins, & Whittam, 2009). To strengthen social networks there should be a sense of trust existing amongst those involved. Social capital can come from a range of sources including both individual and community forms. Massey and Aysa-Lastra (2011: 2) defines individual social capital as ‘migration-enhancing resources that come from direct, personal, and usually close ties to particular people with migratory experience’. Individual social capital tends to refer to strong ties a person has with others based on connections. Community social capital refers to linkages in the community such as that occurring through acquaintances, friends, relatives, and associates (Kwon, Heflin, & Ruef,

2013). This type of social capital is often a driver of social entrepreneurship (Hidalgo, Monticelli, & Vargas Bortolaso, 2024).

Social capital has gained prominence amongst entrepreneurship researchers due to it incorporating perspectives around co-operation and trust (Light & Dana, 2013). It has applicability beyond just one discipline, and it can be utilized in a range of contexts. International social capital can be broadly defined as international resources related to relationship networks. Thereby emphasizing the links to other people have that yield a variety of economic and social benefits. Mahato and Jha (2024) found that it is important to build social capital amongst women entrepreneurs in order to facilitate useful connections. This can help in exchanging information in order to co-create value through social capital that leads to better entrepreneurial activity (Patel & Wolfe, 2024).

Normally social capital in an entrepreneurial setting is discussed at the individual or group level of analysis (Westlund & Bolton, 2003). This is due to its application helping to understand the benefits accruing to people because of their ties to others. People intentionally build relationships for their own benefit that can occur later on. Social capital can be built on cultural knowledge that a person acquires due to their educational credentials and intangible knowledge. This means that most forms of international social capital are developed through the investment of time and money. A person establishes their social capital through their relationships with valued others. This enables access to various forms of information that can provide valuable help.

Social networks support the general norms and culture existing in a community. This helps influence behaviour and the formation of values. Social capital is based on social action that takes a functionalist perspective. Society is governed by social obligations that require interaction with others. Mutual obligations are based on expectations and trust. For supportive social capital there needs to be penalties that discourage transgression. This means trade-offs between current social ties and future potential benefits.

Social capital facilitates productive activity that is based on altruistic ideology, which means close co-operation is designed for mutual beneficial outcomes (Bauernschuster, Falck, & Heblich, 2010). The efficiency of a social network can be due to a closed structure with a set number of members or an open structure that allows new members. Social networks lead to social capital by making information accessible. This gives people capabilities to act in different ways. It is in a person's best interests to invest in their social capital. It can emerge spontaneously by chance or developed based on a planned approach. Usually, social capital increases with usage as individuals realize its benefit.

Female digital entrepreneurship

Digital entrepreneurship has been a growing form of entrepreneurship due to the use of digital technologies and can be used by females to increase their autonomy in the business marketplace (Mousa, Shahzad, & Misbah Shabana, 2024). Initially electronic entrepreneurship was used as a way to understand online business activities, but this altered due to the digital transformation of business making female entrepreneurs use digital technologies (Pappas et al., 2018). As the internet progressed electronic platforms emerged in new areas as a source of value creation. Most notably digital platform companies like Facebook and Amazon grew bigger and altered the global economy. Initially digital entrepreneurship referred to new ways of doing business through technological advancement and has increasingly been used to understand female entrepreneurship (Ratten, 2024). It was followed by conceptualizing it as the use of digital media and information technology in a business setting (Davidson & Vaast, 2010). This meant that opportunities were pursued when combining the use of digital infrastructure with entrepreneurial behaviour (Sussan & Acs, 2017). The increased usage of computing power for business applications further altered the meaning of digital entrepreneurship.

Digital entrepreneurship has been viewed as democratizing entrepreneurship due to it being available to more people regardless of their socio-economic status (Nambisan, 2017). The digital environment makes it easier and more convenient to reach the global marketplace. Therefore, digital entrepreneurship provides advantages to previously marginalized groups such as

female entrepreneurs and it enables online platforms to be developed to suit the needs of female entrepreneurs. Thereby allowing female entrepreneurs to implement their own social and cultural conditions on digital environments.

Digital environments are a neutral platform for entrepreneurship as often the gender of the entrepreneur is unknown. This means it offers a meritocratic environment for female entrepreneurs who may be constricted by their local environment (Alhajri & Aloud, 2024). Therefore, the hierarchies of gender in restricting business practices are reduced. However, a study by Dy, Marlow, and Martin (2017) suggested that digital environments can replicate real environments. Female digital entrepreneurship has the potential to reduce inequality gaps by encouraging more women to be involved in innovative business activity (Chakraborty & Biswal, 2023). Often women engage in entrepreneurship at a similar rate to men. Socially marginalized groups such as females can use digital tools for their benefit in order to promote entrepreneurship (Hull, Tang, Donbesuur, & Adomako, 2023).

Methodology

Lifestyle considerations in the context of music entrepreneurship are an underexplored research area despite its practical relevance (O'Dair & Beaven, 2017). A qualitative research design was utilized for this study as it provides a good way to grasp the complex social dynamics of musical entrepreneurship (Ratten, 2023b). Qualitative research has been used in previous studies on entrepreneurial to understand the socially constructed nature of entrepreneurship (Gregori, Holzmann, & Wdowiak, 2021). An interpretative paradigm approach was utilized in order to capture the participants experiences (Langley & Abdallah, 2015). This helps to focus on the participants as knowledge providers so that their meanings are understood. The Gioia methodology was utilized in order to understand the phenomena of music entrepreneurship. This methodology approach focused on insufficiently investigated topics that require the use of grounded theory (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). It provides a way of studying the meaning in systems of information.

Sample selection

A theoretical sampling strategy was deduced given the emphasis on relevance. This enabled the most appropriate sample to be identified in order to delve deeper into how music entrepreneurs founded new business ventures. To identify female music entrepreneurs who were founders of music business ventures our search initially began by focusing on local market performers and social media sites. Local markets feature a range of musicians who are attracted to the venues due to their willingness to travel. These venues support innovative musicians from a number of different music genres. This context provided us with the necessary information to compile a list of interviewees that included their contact information. From these female music entrepreneurs, a snowball sampling strategy was then utilized from the initial interviewees to obtain further interviewee information. The final sample consisted of 12 female music entrepreneurs who had founded music business ventures. The sample focused on female music entrepreneurs from a range of ages that spanned 19–65 years with an average age of 24 years. Most had a tertiary qualification, and their studies included a range of fields such as business, film, and tourism.

The interviews were conducted in person or via phone and averaged between 20 and 40 mins. At the time of the interviews most music ventures were 1.7 years old indicating their relatively young age. The business ventures mostly occurred in the music industry but also involved the food and tourism industries. Additional secondary data about the music business ventures was collected if available such as documents, websites, and social media. This additional data provided a source of data triangulation in that multiple sources of information were provided. Table 1 provides an overview of the interviewees with pseudonyms given, their previous experience and details about their music business venture.

Table 1. Overview of the interviewees

Pseudonym name	Age	Business founding year	Length of interview (mins)
Abigail	23	2020	23
Betty	56	2021	28
Charlize	52	2019	42
Devon	21	2022	40
Ellen	19	2020	32
Felicity	24	2021	45
Gina	29	2019	41
Hannah	33	2020	28
Ingrid	23	2022	17
Janine	44	2021	21
Kathy	60	2020	16
Lee	23	2021	15

Table 2. Interview protocol

1. Please give some information on your age, educational background, and musical history.
2. Describe how your lifestyle influences your link to the music industry.
3. What kind of contacts do you have that have helped you in the music industry?
4. Please discuss the type of music business ventures you have and how they developed.
5. How do you think music and non-music entrepreneurs differ in their approach to entrepreneurship?
6. What kind of social relationships do you have in the music industry and internationally?
7. How do you think your gender has influenced your entrepreneurial activity?
8. How are digital technologies utilized in your music ventures?

A semi-structured interview protocol (stated in [Table 2](#)) was developed based on the literature review. This included questions about how female music entrepreneurs utilized social capital and digital technologies. The following key points were emphasized: music background, reason for business venture, and current state of music entrepreneurship. The guidelines provided an outline for the sequence of questions but also enabled some freedom to ask follow up questions. Interviewees were encouraged to talk in detail about music entrepreneurship in terms of their own experiences. The interviewees provided in-depth discussion about interesting entrepreneurial activity that was relevant to the research questions.

Data analysis

Building on the grounded theory methodology an iterative coding process to data analysis was conducted (Langley & Abdallah, 2015). This meant the interviews were first interpreted by notes made about their content. As new information emerged from the interviews further data analysis was conducted. This included reflecting on the theoretical meaning of the study indicative in the initial findings. The interviews were transcribed and then carefully read to gain an understanding about the music entrepreneurs' experiences. Then codes based on the expressions stated were derived and first order codes stated. This enabled the interviewees' content to be assessed for similarities and differences. Second order themes were then identified by contrasting and comparing the interviewee data. This enabled concepts to emerge from the interviews that were supported by the literature. Aggregate dimensions then emerged from the second order themes. This was a complex process involving iteration and rethinking. The steps were done by constantly drawing connections between the raw data and the research questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Findings

Music entrepreneurship and lifestyle embeddedness

Music is a lifestyle for many entrepreneurs as they connect with their personal interests (Dumbreck & McPherson, 2015). The female musicians felt their identities were similar to entrepreneurs due to their ability to interest a situation and respond accordingly. Musicians are searching for new forms of expression or trying to innovate their existing repertoire (Everts & Haynes, 2021). This meant they persevered as part of their need to be part of the music industry despite hardships. Our interviews unearthed numerous drivers behind their entrepreneurship such as 'need to succeed', 'pursuing lifestyle', 'music attachment', 'being an individual' and 'wanting to be self-sufficient'. Many interviewees viewed entrepreneurship as part of their lifestyle as enabled them to pursue their own interests. One interviewee stated:

'I started my business because I wanted to make money from my craft. Many of my customers commented on where they could buy my music that made me think, why not start a website and sell it' (Felicity).

Some entrepreneurs started a business because they could operate it within their own hours and viewed themselves as a cultural entrepreneur (Fung & Zhang, 2023). This meant being flexible with where they worked and at what time was important. Being a female music entrepreneur often meant they had to juggle childcaring responsibilities with their work commitment. Hannah said 'I need to work outside of school hours and music enables me the flexibility to do this'. Many saw entrepreneurship as a lifelong pursuit that changed based on environmental conditions that enabled new types of business models to emerge (Gamble, Brennan, & McAdam, 2017). Ingrid explained 'It is important that my music being my priority is part of my business life. I by choice pursued this career and like the autonomy it provides'. Entrepreneurs found pursuing quality of life to be crucial and part of being a musician. For example, Devon stated 'I like my lifestyle in being a musician but need to eat. So I try to combine my music life with my basic necessity needs'. Similarly, Charlize said 'music entrepreneurs are different to other entrepreneurs due to their love of music and music is a way of life'.

The interviewees shared the feeling that music produced special qualities such as enjoyment and love that were linked to quality of life. As Ellen explained, 'the music industry is competitive but at the same time fun and enjoyable. Music has a soul effect on people'. Other interviewees shared similar sentiments that they started in the music industry because of the lifestyle where this was perceived as good or based. Music to them presented a certain lifestyle and through music they can start businesses but some were reluctant entrepreneurs as they preferred to focus on the music rather than commercial activities (Haynes & Marshall, 2018).

International social capital and relationships

International social capital plays an important role in connecting music entrepreneurs to the right people. Haenfler (2018) suggests that participation in entrepreneurial music cultures can lead to new types of careers. Many of the interviewees felt that their international social capital enabled them to make use of digital technology that led to new business ventures. For example, Ellen said 'my contacts particularly those overseas are knowledgeable about new technology including artificial intelligence that help me make new forms of music'. This meant that having good social networks influenced the potential success of music ventures. Although some interviewees felt that social capital might lead them down the wrong path due to influences from their social network. This was expressed by Devon who said 'there is kind of a social halo around my social group as we believe in each other and once or twice this has made me make the wrong decision'.

The interviewees discussed how in the music industry it was sometimes not how well you played music but who you knew. Betty expressed this as 'contacts are everything in the music business as the key people can transform your idea into a reality. You need to stay close to contacts to hear about industry developments'. Insufficient social capital was perceived by the interviewees in a number of

ways but mostly through a lack of having access to the right information. This means the musicians were unable to progress their ideas, which made it hard for them to be entrepreneurial.

Most of the interviewees felt that in the music industry different types of contacts including managers, promoters, and music labels were needed to get ahead. For the purposes of music entrepreneurship, the entrepreneur who had existing business partners had an easier time in navigating the global business environment. This meant they had access to music contacts that enabled them to obtain advice and guidance about music entrepreneurship (Moore, 2016). Abigail stated that 'to conduct business successfully, I need to talk to people in the music industry to maintain relationships'. Other interviewees discussed how bonding with other musicians or fans meant they were able to expand their social network. Morris (2014) discussed how artists are naturally a form of entrepreneur due to their ability to provide leadership and innovation. Some of the interviewees stated that shared similarities amongst people in terms of liking the same music helped them to connect with potential business partners. Ellen said, 'if people love the music they have an emotional attachment and this acts as a bonding mechanism'. Similarly, others talked about a bridging or connectedness in the music industry led to business opportunities. These relationships often bridged cultural and language differences because of the interest in music. Lee stated 'I did not know how to start a business before but knew others who had. Through my music I contacted fellow music lovers to learn about business'.

Developing the right relationships is important to music entrepreneurs who seek ways of being embedded in the music industry. Sadler (1997) found that the global music business relies on economies of scale to leverage benefits of information sharing. Leveraging the benefits of social capital can help in making business ventures a success. Kathy said 'I have a circle of people who talk to each other and provide feedback on ideas. Their collective experience has been invaluable in my success'.

Use of digital technologies

Digital technologies were viewed as essential for music entrepreneurship by the interviewees. To share necessary information about digital business ventures online forums and meeting places were stated. Janine stated that 'the process of music entrepreneurship now needs some form of digital technology. These technologies can be easy or hard to learn but as musicians we set up online learning places to make this happen. There is YouTube videos too to watch on this'. Music entrepreneurship depends on the use of digital technology especially with Instagram and online social networking websites. There is still the old-fashioned face-to-face music events, but increasingly digital technology is being integrated into music experiences. Many of the interviewees used crowdfunding and social networking platforms to share new music and to learn about digital technology. Felicity stated 'I mostly rely on my social networking platforms to find out new information about music technology and potential business ventures'. The reliance on social networking platforms was echoed by Abigail who said 'increasingly social networking sites have forums and discussion boards about music so I focus on these and tend to look at them on a frequent basis'.

Digital technologies made it easy for music entrepreneurs to gain international exposure. As Hannah stated 'digital technology means I can post music online relatively easy and link it to products to sell. It means I have an international audience. I often use digital apps to change my music to make it better'. The music entrepreneurs viewed the use of digital technology as a necessity as it provides beneficial usages in terms of lowering costs. In answering a question regarding cost and value regarding digital technology Kathy commented 'digital tech has been a game changer. Without it we as musicians cannot create businesses'.

The necessity approach in using digital technology was considered important in addressing the new use of artificial intelligence. Some entrepreneurs expressed the view that artificial intelligence had the potential to threaten their existence due to artificial intelligence created music but also has advantages. This meant the way they perceived artificial intelligence differed based on their views of its commercial value. Gina stated 'AI can make music. So we need to be careful about its impact on real

human music entrepreneurs' and Lee said 'AI generated music is a game changer. Will humans still be needed? I am unsure but I hope so'. Other music entrepreneurs embraced the creative potential of artificial intelligence in progressing the music industry. This meant artificial intelligence could reduce the music entrepreneurs' reliance on creating new music to have artificial intelligence self-generate new music, thereby supporting their effort to be entrepreneurial by identifying new market opportunities.

Discussion

The findings of this study support the view that there are gender differences in entrepreneurial behaviour. This means female entrepreneurs are likely to engage in music entrepreneurship in a different way due to their gender and sociocultural position in society. This supports the finding of Naguib (2024) that there are motivations and barriers to female entrepreneurship that need to be considered. This can include lifestyle considerations such as the hours worked and location of jobs. Yang, Kacperczyk, and Naldi (2024) has suggested that female entrepreneurship is constrained by the motherhood wage penalty that can lead to inequalities in the workplace. The interviewees in this study commented that they chose to be musicians because of the creative freedom they achieved that lead to higher levels of entrepreneurial intention.

The music industry is being transformed through platformization and digital technologies so it is important to stay up to date with emerging technologies (Geurts & Cepa, 2023). The interviewees expressed the view that there were lifestyle reasons for them being music entrepreneurs that also related to the flexibility of being a musician. Musgrave (2023) highlighted that it is important to focus on musician's wellbeing as it influences their performance and position in society. As the interviewees in this study stated, developing the right forms of social capital in terms of networks can provide knowledge benefits. This then enables them to utilize contacts to obtain relevant and timely information about potential information that will help them identify entrepreneurial opportunities. Purg, Cacciatore, and Gerbec (2023) stated that in the arts industry establishing ecosystems is a way to cross-fertilize entrepreneurship. Thus, musicians being in the arts industry can utilize feedback received to further their music entrepreneurial intentions. This is part of the creative revision process described by Toivonen, Idoko, Jha, and Harvey (2023) in understanding how entrepreneurs let go of ideas and progress in the global business environment. The female music entrepreneurs in this study were juggling multiple and often concurrent careers that influenced the time they spent on their business ventures. Sobhan and Hassan (2024) found that female entrepreneurs in emerging economies are constrained by their institutional environment. This means that the results of this study could help to understand whether the arts and creative industry context helps or hinders female entrepreneurship.

The interviewees expressed the view that the life of a music entrepreneur particularly a female music entrepreneur can be difficult in terms of longevity. Research by Brew (2023) stated that there are strategies musicians can utilize in terms of ensuring they have a successful career such as managing their work/life balance. Thus, as found in this study lifestyle forms of entrepreneurship may provide better results for female entrepreneurs. Furthermore, Borg (2024) suggests that through creating and executing a plan, musicians can flourish in the music industry. Thus, as the findings of this study suggest that female music entrepreneurs are utilizing digital technology, business plans that incorporate learning can be implemented to ensure better success rates.

Conclusions

Theoretical contributions

The main research aim of this study was to understand the role of digital and lifestyle entrepreneurship amongst female music entrepreneurs, thereby contributing to the developments of women's digital entrepreneurship in filling voids in the marketplace (McAdam, Crowley, & Harrison, 2019). The findings show that female music entrepreneurs constantly juggle multiple tasks and contribute to

the relatively scarce literature on music entrepreneurship in terms of understanding lifestyle embeddedness, international networks, and use of new technology. The study expands our understanding of what it means to be a music entrepreneur and the role of context in entrepreneurial behaviour, thereby highlighting the emancipatory potential of digital entrepreneurship for females (McAdam, Crowley, & Harrison, 2020).

The music entrepreneurs studied were encouraged to be involved in the music industry due to lifestyle reasons that influenced their opportunity recognition. This corresponds with research by Saragih (2019) stating that co-creation experiences are important ways to foster entrepreneurship in the music business. Identifying with being a music entrepreneur is crucial to their success and longevity but also is their gender identity being a female. The findings showed that music role identity and social embeddedness is important in identifying new music opportunities.

Managerial implications

There are numerous managerial implications of this study in terms of improving consumer engagement with musicians. Managers should place more emphasis on personalization rather than mass production. Skold and Rehn (2007) found that consumers interested in music are likely to be interested in other music products such as events and merchandise. Musicians need to collect as much information as possible on changing consumer needs. Hiring social media managers can help increase engagement and flow on product purchases and loyalty. Thus, a strategic factor for music entrepreneurship is for managers to build relationships with customers and their co-creation involvement in new products. Music entrepreneurs should utilize their networks to have more access to resources (Toscher and Morris Bjorno, 2019).

Policy contributions

This study can be of interest to policy makers wanting to harness the creative potential of female music entrepreneurs that are important in the digital era (Ughetto, Rossi, Audretsch, & Lehmann, 2020). Music is a joy to many people but often musicians struggle with funding and a living wage. This means policy needs to be implemented to help musicians become entrepreneurs. The results of this study reveal the immeasurable importance of social networks and relationships in ensuring the success of music entrepreneurs. Accelerators and incubators focused on music entrepreneurs can provide a source of support, which is important especially for independent music production (Walzer, 2017). They can guide music entrepreneurs through education and feedback with funding opportunities. This can bridge the desire to achieve versus the actualization process of entrepreneurship amongst musicians. Intensive training can be provided to budding music entrepreneurs to help them through the ideation to commercialization phase. This ensures mentorship as well as coping mechanisms to alleviate the hardships faced by many music entrepreneurs particularly at the start of their entrepreneurial journey.

Limitations and future research suggestions

This research has limitations that provide room for further work on this topic. By adopting qualitative methods our findings are contextual and spatially based that may mean a decrease in potential generalizability. We identified interviews as the most appropriate methodology given the topic of the study and need for detailed data, but future research could supplement these findings with additional types of study. For example, longitudinal data or case studies of music entrepreneurs could produce detailed findings on the process of music entrepreneurship that is not static. Over time music entrepreneurs may face different obstacles or successes so they need to be analyzed. Large scale global surveys could be used to compare across geographical regions how music entrepreneurship progresses. In a broader sample different types of music entrepreneurs could be included such as jazz, pop, and classical to provide a comprehensive understanding about whether type of music

influences entrepreneurial intentions. Thus, more socio-demographic information about the music entrepreneurs such as age could be presented. To add to this complexity is portfolio entrepreneurs who have multiple business ventures that could include non-musical endeavours. This study suggests avenues for reaching more detailed information about music entrepreneurship will take time. Furthermore, linguistic and cultural origins can influence entrepreneurial activities. Researchers should examine the difference between regions regarding music entrepreneurship to identify the multiculturalism in entrepreneurship. We encourage more research into music entrepreneurship that reflects its diversity and uniqueness in society.

Our study explores the relationship between music entrepreneurship, lifestyle entrepreneurship, and digital entrepreneurship. However, music entrepreneurship is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that can be understood in different ways. This means more research that takes a multi or transdisciplinary approach that integrates the literature on music and entrepreneurship is required. The current study could be extended to take into account different research frameworks from the music and arts management perspective to understand in more detail the role of emotions and behaviour on entrepreneurship. Different theories should be used to test the interrelationship between music and entrepreneurship. There is a lack of integration between the music and digital entrepreneurship fields. It seems whilst digital technology is largely used in a music setting, more research on entrepreneurship is required. This is due to digitalization being the key to illuminating the way musicians become entrepreneurs. In addition, different entrepreneurship literature can be used including entrepreneurial ecosystems and entrepreneurial learning in further research. It may be relevant to focus on entrepreneurial teams or entrepreneurial intentions in understanding music entrepreneurship. This study does not explicitly refer to entrepreneurial learning or entrepreneurial failure, but future research could focus on this area of study. A natural extension of this study is to focus on entrepreneurial opportunities by music entrepreneurs in terms of processes and contexts.

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