

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Study on the Identification of Romanian Perceptions on Manager/Entrepreneurs Women

Diaconu I. Mihaela*, Pandelica Amalia, Uşurelu Elena Cătălina

University of Piteşti, Romania.

*Corresponding Author: E-mail: diaconu_m2005@yahoo.com

Abstract

The goal of this study is to identify the profile of woman manager/ entrepreneurs in Romania and to place it in the context of international studies which focused on identifying her personal and professional characteristics. For the purpose intended we used both qualitative research (in-depth interview with successful women manager/entrepreneur) and quantitative research (sampling). On the basis of these interviews were identified the characteristics according to which it should be built the profile of woman manager/entrepreneur in Romania (measured variables). In the second step of the research process we made a sampling with the purpose of evaluating the perceptions of women manager/entrepreneur employees who were previously interviewed regarding the characteristics identified by them as being relevant for the profile of their leader. The data collection instrument was designed based on the results of the conducted interviews. The sample consisted of employees of companies led by interviewed women manager / entrepreneur. Comparative approach of successful businesses run by women manager / entrepreneur in Romania represents a landmark in identifying the main difficulties and expectations related to the role of entrepreneur / manager that a woman who wants to manage a business it assumes. Women manager / entrepreneur from Romanian have great chances of success in their own businesses, and the differences between male and female managers / entrepreneurs are normal psychological differences. The study allows drawing a profile of the woman entrepreneur / manager in Romania using certain personality traits and aspects of the way of working and the practiced management style.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Management responsibility, Women, Work-family conciliation.*

Introduction

In Romania, ever since the end of the '90s it appeared some successful business made by women, even if they do not have the amplitude and the success of those managed by men. If in the era of communist regime, women and men had formally the same professional chances, in the next period both women and men had the liberty to build their own career or to start their own business. Within a few years, Romanian women started to develop business, proving that they can be efficient. Many of them started to occupy key positions, becoming department managers, directors of companies. Some of them went further and they had their own company.

The studies made in this domain showed that currently one quarter to one third of the business run at global level are initiated by women. The Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development recognized the female entrepreneurship as an important potential that contributes to the economic growth, reason why there were initiated public policies that encourage the involvement of women in business.

Statistics for 2011 on female entrepreneurship in Romania show that at the end of the year there were about 520000 women involved in business, entrepreneurs, administrators or with liberal profession, meaning about 2.2% of Romania's population and only 6.5% of all persons actively employed. The largest share of the total number of women in business are women aged between 30 and 49 years (69%), only 3.5% of women aged up to 25 years had their own business. The foundations of the entrepreneurial culture development among manager women from the SME sector of Romania were laid by the Multiannual National Program between 2005-2011 which aimed to promote a training system that will facilitate the mobility of women in the labour market and develop their entrepreneurial skills.

It was found that, regardless of the country of origin, women manager face the same difficulties. Without claiming the identification of recipes for success in business, our approach aims to identify distinct elements that characterize entrepreneurship/management of a woman and to

emphasize the particularities of woman entrepreneur / manager.

The goal of this study is to identify the profile of woman manager in Romania and to place it in the context of international studies which focused on identifying personal and professional characteristics of women managers, respectively women entrepreneurs.

The problem of female entrepreneurship started to be the subject of studies and research in the '70s. One of the pioneering studies in this domain signed by Schwartz, the year 1976 presented the characteristics of women managers, concluding that the fundamental aspects that characterize women entrepreneurs are the desire for financial independence, workplace satisfaction, concern to be as close to what's happening in business. Among the shortcomings faced by women manager list the discrimination in getting loans for business financing, the inability to correctly estimate the cost of production and marketing of products / services.

In the '80s, female entrepreneurship came to the attention of researchers, especially through the descriptive analysis of personal characteristics and motivations as well as differences from men entrepreneurs. These issues were discussed at conferences in the U.S. and Europe [1-5]. In the second half of the 80 women entrepreneurs interest increased in pursuing the experiences of women entrepreneurs compared to men [6-8]. The researched area was expanded by contributions from Moore [9], Stevenson [10], Lee-Gosselin and Grise [11] who made a synthesis of the results of research and some criticisms of female entrepreneurship. The issues covered in the survey were entrepreneurial motivations, networks work, minority entrepreneurship and business financing women entrepreneurs.

In the '90s female entrepreneurship occupied a central place in the research agenda. The stage of problem's research outlining this issue in entrepreneurship. Then were followed studies published by Chusmir and Parker [12], Allen and Truman [13], Strykowska [14], Lerner [15], Zapalska [16], Dhaliwal [17]. Some researchers recognized the similarities between men and women regarding the education and managerial ability [18], others [14] identified dual connections regarding the biological role and the specific of woman working inside and outside the family. The following studies focused on female experience in business development, business financing, in development strategy [19-23]. The impact of different variables as sex, social contribution to women entrepreneur experience made the object of studies developed by Marlow

[24], Holmquist [25], Boden and Nucci [26]. Coleman [27-28] considers the woman entrepreneur or manager as an important source of economic growth both in terms of the employment and innovation. Yukl [29] claims that so-called female advantage represented by the holding of the skills of interpersonal relationships which place them as high level managers. Other topics addressed in studies were the connection between female entrepreneurship and the gender theory [30-31].

The research topics conducted in 2000 focused on entrepreneurial spirit, strategic entrepreneurship, corporative entrepreneurship, female entrepreneurial spirit [32], woman top manager sex differences regarding the entrepreneurial spirit [33]. Some authors [34], [35], [36] consider that the researches which have as object the differences between men and women to be focused on the organization's type, initiated business type, the sector of activity in which both men and women initiate and run business. In 2007, Diana Project implemented by women entrepreneur from USA managed to impose the female entrepreneurial spirit as a field of research in mass. This showed that female entrepreneurship is similar to the male one and is a part of the entrepreneurial spirit, due to the increasing number of enterprises run by women. Carrasco and al [37] conducted a literature review to identify those studies that have focused on the gender differences in the business world, explored the real barriers of women managers, the advantages and disadvantages of businesses run by women. Stoker, Velde, Lammer [38], starting from the role matching theory of Eagly [39] which provides that it there are inconsistencies between female gender role and the role of manager, they suggested that gender stereotypes and the management do not change. Recent studies about women and management can be found in "Sex roles" – a journal of research (no. 1/ January 2, 3012), which represent the most useful documentation as a point of starting for the gender research in management that includes 54 articles presented in two volumes with 120 studies in management and psychology.

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study is to identify the profile of woman manager in Romania under the actual social and economic conditions. For the purpose intended, in the research process we went through several stages and we used several collection methods and the analysis of data and information. Thus, to build the profile of woman manager we used both qualitative research (in-

depth interview) and quantitative research (sampling).

In the first step of research process we led 10 in-depth interviews with successful women manager/entrepreneur with the purpose of identifying the elements that contributed to create their successful business and of establishing the profile of woman manager/entrepreneur. Women who participated to half-controlled in-depth interviews are aged between 27 and 44 years and lead successful business in the SME field (were profitable in 2011). The fields of activity of the companies managed by these women entrepreneur/manager are: restaurant and catering, accounting and fiscal consultancy, clothes trade, food trade, logistics, medical services.

On the basis of these interviews were identified the characteristics according to which it should be built the profile of woman manager/entrepreneur in Romania (measured variables) and were identified the sacrifices and compromises that are involved in the professional ascension/development of a business for a woman manager/entrepreneur in the actual socio-economic context in Romania, thus establishing the context of formulating the research hypotheses.

The Interview Guide Contained the Following Topics

- The current state of business and business strategic vision for the next five years;
- The most important professional and personality characteristics that a woman manager/entrepreneur should possess;
- The coordinates of a successful business in Romania in view of a woman manager / entrepreneur;
- Difficulties encountered by a female manager / entrepreneur in developing / conducting business in the current socio-economic context of Romania;
- Recommendations to women who want to develop their own business;
- Point of view of the existence of gender discrimination in business in Romania;
- Women manager / entrepreneur tend in taking good practices within their business.

In the second step of the research process we made a sampling with the purpose of evaluating the perceptions of women manager/entrepreneur employees who were previously interviewed regarding the characteristics identified by them as being relevant for the profile of woman entrepreneur/manager, for the final goal of the study – shaping the profile of woman entrepreneur/manager in the actual socio-economic context of Romania. The data collection

instrument was designed based on the results of the conducted interviews, being selected a number of 12 variables to design the profile. For measuring these variables were used closed questions built using the semantic differential with 5 steps, where 1 represented very little extent, 3 – neither-nor, 5 - in very great extent. The sample consisted of 80 employees of companies led by interviewed women manager / entrepreneur.

Formulating the Investigated Hypotheses

The results of the conducted interviews represented the context of formulating the hypotheses tested on the carried survey.

H1: In the actual socio-economic context there is the perception according to which the woman manager/entrepreneur has great chances to succeed in starting their own business.

H2: Successful woman manager / entrepreneur is aged between 41 and 50 years.

H3: The most important characteristic of a successful woman manager / entrepreneur that differentiates her from a man entrepreneur / manager is that she is sympathetic to her employees / empathy with others.

H4: The most important skill of a woman manager / entrepreneur is the leadership

H5: Management style adopted by most women manager / entrepreneur is an authoritarian-participatory one. Compared with the male entrepreneur / manager, they adopt a rather more participatory style.

H6: The relations promoted within the working environment in companies led by female managers / entrepreneurs are relaxing.

H7: The communication between the woman entrepreneur / manager and employee on achieved targets / current activities is a key element of success.

H8: The strength of a successful woman entrepreneur / manager is the operational making-decisions.

Result and Discussion

As we can see from the average obtained at the level of the sample (average= 3.75), a large part of the respondents appreciated that women entrepreneur/manager have good chances of success in initiating an own business. It is noted that, in the last 20 years, the remanent mentalities according to which woman's role in Romanian society is other than to take the initiative and the entrepreneurial thinking has changed significantly. These results show the fact that, currently, there is the perception according to which women and men entrepreneur have good chances of success in initiating and developing their own business. H1 predicted that, in the

actual social and economic context, both women and men have good chances of success in initiating and developing their own business. The research results support this, so H1 is accepted.

Tab. 1: Descriptive statistics – Perception of the chances of success of women entrepreneurs / manager in the initiation and development of their business

Chances of success	Very large extent	Large extent	Neither-nor	Little extent	Very little extent
Number of cases	20	40	5	10	5
Relative frequencies	25%	50%	6%	13%	6%

Regarding the ideal age of woman entrepreneur/manager, most of the respondents appreciated that the age range for starting and running a business is between 31 and 40 years. If female managers interviewed consider that it takes a certain maturity and experience to start a business, the employees appreciate that the enthusiasm, dynamism and work capacity which is characteristic to the period between 31 and 40 years represent the key issue for the success of a business. H2 predicted that the ideal age of a successful woman entrepreneur / manager is between 41-50 years. According to the research results, most respondents (50%) identified the ideal age range for starting and developing a business as being between 31-40 years. So, H2 is rejected.

Tab. 2: Descriptive statistics -Perception of ideal age of a woman entrepreneur / manager to initiate and develop a business

Ideal age of a woman entrepreneur / manager	Number of cases	Relative frequencies
Under 30 years (inclusively)	5	6%
31-40 years old	40	50%
41-50 years old	25	31%
Peste 50 years old	10	13%
Total	80	100%

As we can see, the interviewed respondents consider that the three characteristics of woman manager/entrepreneur personality are: integrity, understanding / empathy towards their employees and charisma. Placing these results in the context of previous studies on this topic at an international level, it can be seen that a woman manager personality profile in Romania is not so different from that designed in other countries, these features being considered essential in drawing the gender differences in the manifestation of entrepreneurship. H3 considered

that the main personality feature of a successful woman entrepreneur is understanding and empathy with the others. The research results place this personality feature in the second place among the measured ones. So, H3 is rejected.

Tab.3: Descriptive statistics-Perception of the main features of the personality of women entrepreneur / manager

Features of the personality of women entrepreneur / manager	Relative frequencies
Honest	57%
Prudent	15%
Understanding	48%
Charismatic	30%
Authoritative	12%
Total	162%

Regarding the main aspects of the way of working and leading the business, the interviewed respondents appreciated that a successful woman entrepreneur/manager is well organized, has leadership skills, generally manages to persuade others to follow her, rather than impose it and is a very good communicator.

Tab.4: Descriptive statistics-Perception of the main features of the operating mode of the woman entrepreneur / manager

Features of the operating mode of the woman entrepreneur / manager	Relative frequencies
Develops and work easy in team	25%
Is well organized	54%
Is communicative	44%
Has the capacity to mobilize and persuade others to follow her	50%
Is professional	22%
Total	195%

These results support the previously identified personality features. H4 predicted that a successful woman manager has primarily leadership skills. This feature of the way of working and leading was placed by the respondents in the second place after the organizational capacity. So, H4 is rejected. According to the research results, the respondents appreciate that a successful woman entrepreneur/manager practices an authoritarian-participative management style. If for men entrepreneurs/managers previous studies have identified that they tend to practice a rather authoritarian management style, women tend to be placed on the opposite side on the participative style. Still, as the research results highlight, in the respondents' perception a successful woman manager/entrepreneur combines elements characteristic of the two management styles. H5 predicted the fact that a successful woman manager practices an authoritarian-participative

management style, 57% of the respondents appreciated this. So, H5 is accepted.

Tab.5: Descriptive statistics-Perception of managerial style practiced by successful women entrepreneur / manager

Managerial style practiced by successful women entrepreneur / manager	Number of cases	Relative frequencies
Authoritative	8	10%
Participative	23	28%
Authoritarian-participative	45	57%
I do not know	4	5%
Total	80	100%

On the working environment in companies run by women, as the results highlight, a significant majority (65%) said that relations between the members of the organization are relaxed and based on friendship, being a pleasant working atmosphere.

Tab. 6: Descriptive statistics -perception of the atmosphere in firms run by women

The atmosphere in firms run by women	Number of cases	Relative frequencies
Relaxing	32	40%
Friendship	20	25%
Stressing	13	16%
Tense	15	19%
Total	80	100%

H6 predicted the fact that the relationships between the employees in firms run by women are relaxing. So, H6 is accepted.

Practicing a managerial style which combines authority elements with participation ones is observed also in the results regarding the way of determining the activities of employees. According to the results, it is observed that the majority of respondents say that the woman entrepreneur / manager is consultative, involving employees in defining how the current activities underway. It also notes that she is accustomed to give a certain degree of freedom in carrying out the current tasks. This is supported by the fact that 29% of respondents said that the manager is not involved in the daily activities performed by the employee, trusting that he knows what he has to do interfering strictly in solving a punctual problem. H7 predicted the fact that the communication between woman entrepreneur/manager and employee referring to the objectived to be achieved/current activities represents a key element of success, according to the results, we can see a high level of communication and consulting. So, H7 is accepted.

When respondents were asked to identify the strength of women entrepreneurs / business in developing a business, most of them appreciated that this has as a main advantage making decisions with an operational character, meaning

Tab.7: Descriptive statistics-Perception of communication in shaping the current activities

Level of communication in shaping the current activities	Number of cases	Relative frequencies
I do not answer	2	3%
She does not ever tell me what to do, which demotivates me	5	6%
Most of the time, she does not tell me what to do because I surely do know what to do	23	29%
We establish together the things to do	37	46%
She tells me daily/weekly what to do	13	16%
Total	80	100%

the ability to decide quickly on ordinary activities. Also, the decision making with strategic nature, was indicated as the main advantage of a large number of respondents. H8 predicted as strength of a woman entrepreneur/manager the ability of decision. According to the results, H8 is accepted.

Tab.8: Descriptive statistics-Perception of strenghts of a woman entrepreneur/manager

Strenghts of a woman entrepreneur/manager	Number of cases	Relative frequencies
Supervising the staff	4	5%
Negotiating contracts with customers	5	6%
Negotiating contracts with suppliers	2	3%
Contacting potential customers	3	4%
Tracking contracts	9	11%
Operational decisions	27	34%
Strategic decisions	18	22%
Personnel selection and setting personnel policy	12	15%
Total	80	100%

Conclusions

The relevance of this paper is to analyze the current situation in our country regarding the role and characteristics of women manager / entrepreneur which can represent subjects of further research in this important and sensitive domain.

By these conducted researches, both qualitative and quantitative of survey type, we analyzed the personality and professional characteristics of women managers in Romania using in-depth interviews and survey among employees of these female entrepreneur / manager.

The main conclusions drawn from the interviews conducted are: In most cases, decision to launch in business was driven by the desire for independence and power, without escaping family responsibilities. There is similarity in the reporting of business to a positive attitude, balanced view of the risks assumed. For none of the women manager participating in the interview, gender discrimination is not an obstacle in business management; professionalism and reliability are attitudes that generate an accurate perception of their customers, partners and employees. Indicators related to personality traits that define a successful woman manager / entrepreneur in the view of the interview participants are: perseverance, reliability, involvement, effective communication, accuracy, information and continuous entrepreneurial training. Traditional indicators of success, profit and business size are evaluated differently. Success is equivalent to the favorable image of business among customers and partners, and business size increases with experience and success. The ingredients of a successful business as they result from the interview are: self-confidence, strong will to achieve goals, the necessary power to find solutions, efficient management of resources and seriousness in dealing with employees and partners.

Women manager / entrepreneur interviewed express their conviction that both men and women have equal capabilities and opportunities, and for women who want to start a business consider important the optimistic and proactive attitude necessary for effective management of the problems that arise. In the approach of starting a business is needed vocation, opportunities and projects, stimulations and encouragement, the liberty of organizing the time and activities, the liberty of managing family problems, personalized work environment, correlation between personal values, business ethic and work ethic friendly working relationship, continuous training in an attractive working environment.

Comparative approach of successful businesses run by women manager / entrepreneur in Romania represents a landmark in identifying the

main difficulties and expectations related to the role of entrepreneur / manager that a woman who wants to manage a business it assumes. Among the most important conclusions drawn from the implementation of quantitative research using the survey as a research method regarding the employee perceptions of women managers / entrepreneurs interviewed are: women manager / entrepreneur from Romanian have great chances of success in their own businesses, and the differences between male manager / entrepreneur and female managers / entrepreneurs are normal psychological differences; a successful woman manager / entrepreneur is aged between 31-40 years; the most important personality features necessary to a woman manager / entrepreneur are: cele mai importante trăsături de personalitate necesare unei femei manager/antreprenor sunt: understanding of others / empathy, integrity and charisma; three most important professional skills that that a woman manager / entrepreneur must show are: good organizer, leadership skills and effective communication; the most important features of the woman manager / entrepreneur are the ability to motivate employees, communicate effectively, attractive workplace environment;

Vulnerability is a flaw that prevents women manager / entrepreneur in their professional ascent but it is not the most important. The biggest impediment to professional ascent of a woman manager / entrepreneur is the importance given to family over career.

The limits of this research come from the fact that the sample on which the measurements were realized in the survey was too small to expand the results. However, the study allows drawing a profile of the woman entrepreneur / manager using certain personality traits and certain aspects of the way of working and the practiced management style. Based on the study conducted, in the future we intend to expand the research at the level of firms led by men to identify the extent to which there are differences of perception on the profile of women entrepreneurs / managers between the employees of the firms run by men and the employees of firms run by women.

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