

Chapter 19

May That Nothing Limit Us, May That Nothing Define Us: The Context of Women Entrepreneurs in Startups

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ABSTRACT

The act of undertaking entrepreneurial activity comprises taking advantage of market opportunities, but this does not occur indiscriminately in relation to the gender of the entrepreneur. This chapter aims to analyze the context of the development of startups from the perspective of the women participation in this scenario. Thus, an overview of the development of startups in an international context and their relationship with the characteristics of entrepreneurship as a theoretical background involving this panorama is presented as results. In addition, specifically in relation to the purpose of the study, the text of the chapter deals with the issue of women in the development of startups, the theoretical discussions about women entrepreneurship, and how the experience of female participation in the development of startups is characterized in the academic literature. The chapter situates Brazilian contextual information but brings it to a broader discussion of entrepreneurship under the gender bias.

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INTRODUCTION

It is in the scenarios of revolution that innovations arise. Population expansion from field-to-city migrations, the Industrial Revolution, the discovery of electricity and oil, the technological revolution with the personal computer and the internet, are some contextual examples of this argumentation. Consequently, these transformations have modified social paradigms, but not only of relationships, because innovations “are not restricted only to the idea of technological capabilities” (Dullius & Schaeffer, 2016, p.37). Maia (2016, p.23) complements that innovation is “a dynamic element of the economy and the entrepreneur is the one who performs it”, corroborating Schumpeter (1988) who believes that innovation promotes change, combining resources in a differentiated and original way and promotes economic growth. Innovations are part of the process of creative destruction and the entrepreneur is the one who performs it.

With origins in the medieval era, it was in the context of innovations, especially in the period of accelerated industrialization, that the meaning of entrepreneurship arose (Franco & Gouvêa, 2016). This is characterized as a process that starts from the identification of a business opportunity, accompanied by the development of an idea and evaluation of its feasibility, development of products and services that will be offered, assembly and fundraising and search for clients (Albuquerque & Teixeira, 2016). In this way, entrepreneurship is a complex activity that involves a challenging execution process.

According to Silva, Furtado & Zanini (2015) in the 1990s and 2000s entrepreneurship underwent a process of growth acceleration and increase of proportion in the world context. Several actions justify these events, such as the development of incubators and technology parks, incentives for entrepreneurship at all educational levels, government incentives through programs to support technology and innovation, subsidies for the creation and development of new businesses, and creation of business development agencies and support to entrepreneurship (Silva, Furtado & Zanini, 2015). The authors also point out that at the same time, there is a worldwide interest in the subject, both by national governments and by multinational organizations and entities, since both believe that the economic power of countries depends on future entrepreneurs and the competitiveness of their businesses.

In Brazil, entrepreneurship gained attention in the 1990s, when the internal market was opened for external competition, the economy was also opened and the state privatization process had begun (Bracht & Werlang, 2015). In this way, the country presented itself in favorable circumstances to the development of entrepreneurial activities, given the greater freedom for new entrepreneurs to act. Over the past years and combined with technological development, the scenario of Brazilian enterprises has evolved. According to Costa (2018), Brazil had a rate of entrepreneurship that was among the largest in the world in 2016, made up of 35% of the adult population. In addition, 55% of the population believed in the hypothesis of undertaking entrepreneurial activities in their regions. In 2013, 40 million new entrepreneurs emerged in the country (Cavalheiro, 2015), demonstrating the growth of activities in the national context. From this scenario, where the search for opportunities gains prominence, entrepreneurship transmutes and marks the national and international context, where the conditions for the emergence of startups were born (Carvalho et al., 2018). “Startups are considered to be nascent technology-based companies that have in their disruptive technological innovation the foundations of their competitive strategy” (Dullius & Schaeffer, 2016, p.36).

Maia (2016) argues that startups take ownership of these technological advances to serve the market through innovative practices, taking high risks. These companies appear around the period from 1996 to 2001, with the so-called “internet bubble” in Silicon Valley in the state of California, USA, with companies such as Google, Facebook, eBay, among others based in information technology. The innovative

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