A Business Case for the Adoption of a Knowledge Management Strategy and Government Policy as Precursors for Divapreneurship Development in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The study showcases a business value proposition to policy makers for the adoption of a business paradigm involving the infusion of knowledge management practices, strategic thinking and government policy intervention for divapreneurship development in Zimbabwe. The significance of knowledge management (KM) in women entrepreneurial development arises from the fact that, KM is considered as one of the most effective strategic tools for enterprise survival (Kim and Koh, 2011). The study also investigated the antecedents of bringing about the divatude (positive attitude) in women, as a new way of addressing the impediments to the development of women so that they could be united, driven, inspired, action oriented and victorious ensuring that divapreneurship development becomes a reality in Zimbabwe (Bbenkele, 2013). The mixed method research paradigm was adopted with both quantitative and qualitative data integrated in data collection. Consequently, basing on a purposive sample of 558 structured questionnaires, and focus group discussions, data was collected in line with the sequential explanatory approach. The study was carried out in Bulawayo and Harare Metropolitan Provinces, and Matabeleland North Provinces in Zimbabwe. The study recommended a ten factor framework for divapreneurship development involving universities as the nerve centre, in unrolling entrepreneurial education and training working in collaboration with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Gender and Community Development.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Government Policy, Divatude, Divapreneurship Development.

INTRODUCTION

The business world has increasingly become competitive, thus creativity and innovativeness are now critical, more so in the Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) sector. Thus in the 21st Century knowledge assets, intellectual capital, expertise, and networks have become the most sought after resources by organisations (Geisler and Wickiamasinghe, 2009, Girard, 2015). Consequently, the embracement of knowledge strategies through combining knowledge management (KM) practices and strategic management have become imperative for enterprise development. The Global Entrepreneurship and Development Index (GDEI) for 2016 showed that female businesses accounted for between forty to fifty percent of all registered businesses. However, disappointingly, most of these businesses barely survive up to three years. There have been success stories from various sectors that have adopted KM processes, yet there is little evidence in literature showing the extent to which women entrepreneurs have adopted KM strategies for enhancing decision making, collaboration and innovation. Bbenkele (2013) made an observation that it is important to develop the positive attitude in women, through equipping them with the ‘divatude.’ This divatude would ensure that women entrepreneurs are ‘united, driven, inspired, victorious, focussed and action oriented,’ for business success. The embracement of the divatude would lead to an emergence of thriving divapreneurship ventures in Zimbabwe (Bbenkele, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

Notwithstanding the fact that women owned businesses account for more than a third of the world businesses and employment creation, surprisingly only 10% of research is attributed to this sector worldwide (Allen et al, 2007, Brush and Cooper, 2012). Moreover, as noted by Parker (2010), women entrepreneurship research is fraught with contradictions. There is dearth information that provides practical direction for women entrepreneurs intending to establish or grow small businesses or policy makers and non-governmental organisations seeking to improve the entrepreneurial climate. Moreover, developing countries are facing the challenge that they are still orienting their strategies of involving women entrepreneurs using methods of ‘give’ to support and not empowering them so that they are self-sustaining (Bbenkele, 2013).

Although, it has been established that women entrepreneurs embark on businesses twice as often as men do, it is disappointing that most women owned businesses hardly survive up to three years (Yin, 2012). Moreover, as alluded to by Vossenberg (2016), in order for female businesses to develop, policy makers, non-governmental organisations as well as the private sector have to make sure that women enterprise growth plans are guided by a rigorous documentation of their value propositions as well as calculated requirements and ambitions. Most governments continue to develop policies to enhance women entrepreneurs without guidance from research evidence for effective policy
implementation (Xu et al., 2017). Given the economic impact, social impact and knowledge gap in women entrepreneurship it was important to carry out the study.

Research Objectives

The general objective of the study was to establish if there is an interrelationship between a knowledge management strategy implementation and government policy interventions in divapreneurship development in Zimbabwe.

1. To investigate approaches for developing divapreneurship in Zimbabwe.
2. To establish the extent to which divapreneurs have adopted KM strategies for their development in Zimbabwe.
3. To determine the relationship between government policy interventions and divapreneurship development in Zimbabwe.
4. To identify any gaps for implementation in government policies with reference to divapreneurship development.
5. To develop a model that Zimbabwe could adopt for developing divapreneurs.

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

A Global Overview of Women Entrepreneurship

Up until the 1990s, male-centric business models were viewed as the natural models for conducting business (Yadav and Unni, 2016). The world view in developed countries such as the United States, was that women businesses were just small lifestyles not to be taken seriously. Hence, this view led to the inconspicuousness of women business challenges consequently, compounding the limited understanding of the precursors necessary to grow this sector (Ahl, 2006). As more research was pursued in the exploratory area of women entrepreneurship, findings began suggesting that women were vital in the broader entrepreneurship landscape due to their contribution to the Gross National Product (GNP) of a country (Niethammer, 2013; Sarfaraz et al., 2014). Since 2006 the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) has consistently provided annual reports on women entrepreneurship development. Another source of vital information on women entrepreneurship is the Global Entrepreneurship Development Institution (GEDI), which analyses conditions fostering women entrepreneurial development in various countries. The GEDI report (2017) revealed that the top ten countries that provide a conducive environment for growing female owned businesses were the: United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, France and Finland. Developing countries emerged as the lowest in women entrepreneurship development support effort (Female Entrepreneurship index, 2015, Terjesen and Lloyd, 2015). The Global Entrepreneurship Index (GEI) focuses on combining individual data such as opportunity recognition, education and economic freedom, start-up skills, risk acceptance, with institutional measures for measuring a country’s entrepreneurial progress. Despite all these yardsticks for measuring women entrepreneurship progress, the challenge is that most developing countries do not provide metrics revealing progress on their entrepreneurship development.

Review of Empirical Literature

Barreira (2004) conducted a quantitative study on the effect of business knowledge and work experience as antecedents to entrepreneurship development in South Africa. The study discovered a weak correlation between business knowledge and entrepreneurial success. However, previous work experience was found to be a strong precursor to entrepreneurial success. The implications of that study was that it is important for women entrepreneurs to be exposed to experiential learning for them to gain business experience in order to enhance decision making capabilities. However, the role of government policy in entrepreneurial success was not explored leaving a gap which made the current study necessary. Since the study by Barreira (2004), was quantitative the views and perceptions of women entrepreneurs could not be captured thus depriving the study of the rich and insightful contributions of women entrepreneurs regarding their business experiences which a mixed method research approach could have provided.

In a review of government initiatives to stimulate women entrepreneurship in South Africa for the period 1995-2009, Derera (2011), established that women entrepreneurs are still facing various types of barriers to entry into the SMEs sector. Despite effort by government to provide support programmes for women entrepreneurship programmes, it appeared that the majority of the respondents were not aware that there were government initiatives targeted at them. Thus, a systems revamp in terms of policy implementation was recommended. The limitation of the study was that it was concentrated in one province, hence, a study of a greater magnitude could provide more replicable results. Turyasingura (2011), examined the interdependency of knowledge management and organisational learning in Ugandan Institutions of higher learning. Empirical evidence from the mixed method study confirmed that KM and organisational learning were indeed interdependent and played a critical role in promoting learning at various levels of an organisation. The study made recommendations that higher education institutions in Uganda should prioritise implementation strategies aimed at manipulating available knowledge and also discovering new knowledge, but did not explore the role of government policy which the current study sought to address. It is the contention of the current study that government intervention in the provision of a conducive business environment is an area that needs interrogation.

Notwithstanding the above studies, Mboko, Smith-Hunter and Boyd (2009), researched into Zimbabwean women entrepreneurs’ survival strategies and growth implications and impediments to women business success. These obstacles were related to years of protracted and socio-economic challenges as a result of the male-centric society in Zimbabwe. The study exposed the need for a roadmap that women entrepreneurs could use to grow so as to join the mainstream economy, hence this gap needed to be addressed. In another related study, Zindiye et al (2012), looked into the effect of government and institutional support available to SMEs in the manufacturing sector. The study revealed the critical role played by government and other institutions in enhancing SMEs performance as well as the importance of skills training for the development. The study looked at all SMEs yet segregation of the SMEs sector is important, since each group has training needs peculiar to its segment for its growth. For example, although women and youths fall within the same category in the sense that they are a special disadvantaged group, their training needs differ.

Furthermore, Nani (2011) interrogated business challenges faced by urban Zimbabwean women entrepreneurs. Although, Nani (2011), identified a myriad of obstacles hindering the development of women’s businesses, the role of government in alleviating the challenges was not explored. Hence as long as no prescriptions are provided on what needs to be done by government to grow women entrepreneurs, divapreneurship will remain an illusion in Zimbabwe. Given, these knowledge gaps in the study the current research set out to make a business case for the adoption of a knowledge management strategy and government policy as strong precursors for divapreneurship development.
As highlighted by Mason and Brown (2014), it is clear that government policy is a key enabling factor in women entrepreneurship development. Niethammer (2013) concurs going further to identify barriers to women entrepreneurship as being: failure to access credit facility, lack of training, poor networks, shortage of appropriate information for decision making, as well as legal and policy constraints. In developing countries such as Zimbabwe, where women have historically suffered over centuries due to discrimination, entrepreneurial support programmes need to be put in place by governments to address gender imbalances brought about by previous patriarchal systems (Minniti, 2015). However, lack of knowledge of the existence of such support systems seems to be a prominent challenge in women entrepreneurship development (Audet et al, 2007). Poor marketing of the availability of government entrepreneurial support systems as well as bureaucracy are cited as some of the challenges hindering growth of female owned businesses (Ong et al, 2010). Notwithstanding the above revelations, studies by Mboko, Smith-Hunter and Boyd (2009) revealed that women in Zimbabwe have not fully liberated themselves from the marginalised position imposed by the patriarchal society. The antecedents to women entrepreneurial development seems to hinge on strategies that amend and transform systemic inequalities, and align government policy and non-governmental organisations with the promotion of women enterprise development. It is therefore, critical to look into the current legal and policy framework prevailing in Zimbabwe, since an enabling business environment is paramount in enterprise development.

Knowledge strategy integrates a knowledge management strategy and strategic management in order to create new value by considering knowledge as a strategic resource in management decision making (Edvinsson, 2002). The crafting of a business strategy, will ensure that the operations of women enterprises are aligned to the strategic plan, mission and the vision. Such a strategic alignment will ensure that the enterprises do not lose sight of their reason for existence. The use of technological innovations such as big data analytics results in improved women business performance, efficient decision making, efficient processes and quality products and service provision. Through entrepreneurship training interventions, divers could be equipped with requisite knowledge, skills and the right attitudes for success. Without the provision of an enabling environment through government policy, women entrepreneurship development will remain elusive. The embracement of the dividatude could be attained through entrepreneurship training and education as well as continuous learning through knowledge sharing workshops and seminars.

Hypotheses

H1 There is a positive relationship between knowledge sharing and divapreneurship development in Zimbabwe.
H2 There is a positive relationship between knowledge strategy and divapreneurship development.
H3 There is a positive relationship between government policy intervention and divapreneurship development in Zimbabwe.
H4 There is a positive relationship between continuous learning and divapreneurship development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology adopted for investigating the phenomenon under study is presented in order to provide the techniques and options that were available to answer the study’s questions, thereby achieving the study’s objectives. The case for post-positivism is argued, on the grounds that, in social and behavioural science studies, absolute objectivity does not exist, in which the researcher is completely divorced from the topic under study.

Research Paradigm

The study adopted the post-positivist paradigm, based on the understanding that researching knowledge management strategies and government policy in divapreneurship development is deeply rooted in the social and behavioural context. The choice of such an approach also hinges on the fact that total objectivity is considered to be impossible in social and behavioural science research. Furthermore, it is assumed that subjectivity is inherent in the social and behavioural world, although it can be reduced by means of triangulation of the methods used, through introspecting and by subjecting the topic covered to scrutiny (Easterby-Smith et al, 201). Such practices can, at least partly, be measured to a certain extent on a scale representing the perceptions of the respondents.
Research Design and Strategies

Babbie and Mouton (2009: 72) define a research design ‘as the planning of scientific inquiry, meaning to specify as clearly as possible what the researcher wants to discover and to determine the best way to do so.’ This current study adopted a non-experimental research design using mixed-method research. The logic for this strategy was that the weaknesses of each individual method would be compensated for by counterbalancing with the strength of another and by combining methods, the researcher hoped to overcome the deficiencies of each method (Creswell, 2006, Tashakkori and Teddie, 2003; Creswell, 2009; Easterby-Smith et al, 2015).

The Research Problem Revisited

What motivated this study was the fact that whilst knowledge management models and strategies have been well constructed in developed countries and successfully applied for SMEs development there is limited research and evidence of successful adoption of these practices by divapreneurs in Zimbabwe (Chen et al, 2012, Davenport, 2013). There was also lack of periodical evaluation of the impact of SMEs associated government policies on the development of women businesses and there was dearth information on the extent to which women businesses took advantage of these policies. As noted by Parker (2010) and earlier by Greene et al (2003), the scholarly entrepreneurship literature has reached few solid conclusions, and is often contradictory, and continues to provide little practical direction for female entrepreneurs intending to establish or grow small businesses or policy makers seeking to improve the entrepreneurial climate. Furthermore, from prior studies (Mboko, Smith-Hunter and Boyd, 2009), the government of Zimbabwe has not come up with specific policies that bring about divatude in women, hence, without a paradigm shift in government policy, from the ‘give to support’ policy which currently obtaining divapreneurship will remain elusive.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Quantitative Findings

**To Investigate Approaches for Developing Divapreneurship in Zimbabwe**

In an effort to establish the approaches that had been taken to enhance divapreneurship development in Zimbabwe, interviews were held with women entrepreneurs who had survived for more than three years and experts involved in offering support to that sector. It was established that the government promotes women entrepreneurship development through the Small Enterprise Development Corporation (SEDCO) and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Community Development, Small and Medium Enterprises. Loans were disbursed through SEDCO to finance facilities and operations for SMEs including women entrepreneurs when available from government through a set criteria.

**To Establish Whether Divapreneurs Had Adopted KM Strategies for Their Development in Zimbabwe.**

Respondents were asked whether they had embraced the use of knowledge management practices and information communication technologies (ICTs) and 75% confirmed that they had embraced ICTs, internet of things and utilised computers in their day to day operations. 25% had even gone further to embrace digital literacy. Thus all respondents (100%) were using some form of ICTs or smart phone. Bratianu (2015) states that a turbulent economic environment requires the embracement of strategic thinking. The Zimbabwean economic environment is not stable due to inflationary pressures exerted by various economic fundamentals, hence, strategic thinking is critical. A knowledge strategy can result in knowledge exploitation leading to the efficient use of explicit knowledge in order to maximise profits through knowledge creation and using created knowledge to innovate products and services.

**To Determine the Relationship Between Government Policy Interventions and Divapreneurship Development in Zimbabwe**

One respondent commented that:

‘You cannot control your economic destiny if you are unable to mobilise savings…’

Hence failure to mobilise savings was seen as a hindrance to enterprise development, technical development, as well as failure to expand national productivity, value addition and beneficiation and transformation of Zimbabwean firms from primary produce to secondary produce were some of the challenges stated. Enterprise development was also hindered by antiquated machinery as a result of capital flight in Foreign Direct Investment (FDIs). There was also the issue of perceived high country risk profile due to perceived government policy inconsistence as it was noted that the risk profile was increasing, and there was discord and lack of competitiveness in the market. There was dire need for consultation of various business sectors before policies were crafted in particular with reference to women business development. There was also need for local content protection which would enable local enterprises to have a guaranteed market for their products.

Women alluded to the high cost of doing business in Zimbabwe due to lack of competitiveness as the country had the highest tax of 37%, high interest rates of 20-30 % for bank loans. There were also challenges to divapreneurship development due to power cuts resulting in production downtime, infrastructural bottlenecks, high cost of production, reduced productivity, low investments and all these challenges reduced revenue for the government making funding unavailable to women businesses. It was noted that there was serious fiscal indiscipline in the economy which had negative impact on the performance of the business sector.

Divapreneurs bemoaned the absence of adequate, reliable, affordable and sustainable infrastructure for their operational stability. The recommendations were that the government through its policy should tackle corruption, in particular at the border post where Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) was said to be failing to arrest corruption. ZIMRA also had too many tax heads which affected women enterprise efficiencies and development.

It was established that women business development was affected by lack of foreign currency due to the inability by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe to regulate currency. The absence of a local currency at the time the research was carried out and the use of the surrogate bond notes was grossly impacting negatively the ability of women business operations as they could not import vital stock for their operations, due to the unavailability of foreign currency. Hence, the government needed to capitalise the financial sector to avail loans to women business owners and act as a guarantor for those loans.

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To develop a model that Zimbabwe can adopt for developing divapreneurs.

The respondents understood entrepreneurship training to take two forms, formal and informal learning. Either one underwent skills training on-the-job and occasionally attended seminars and workshops through continuous learning offered by various organisations or one could go to one of the universities in Zimbabwe that offered entrepreneurial education and study. It was established that some of the universities that offered entrepreneurial education were Lupane State University, Chinhoyi Institution of Technology and Ezekiel Guti University. According to most respondents the limiting factor to studying for degree programmes was that the duration was long (four years) and some respondents could not spare the time to pursue the studies. An interview was conducted at one of the departments that provide a degree programme in Entrepreneurship and the view of those involved in the programme was that entrepreneurship should be inculcated starting from primary school up to Higher learning Institutions where a module on entrepreneurship should cut across all disciplines. That way it was more likely that the entrepreneurial spirit could be nurtured at an early stage and entrepreneurship could become a career option rather than a necessity led option to evade unemployment. The organisations that were involved in organising workshops and seminars were mainly EMPRETEC, SEDCO and the Zimbabwe Youth Council, ZNCC, ZAMFI as well as ZimTrade. The challenge faced by respondents with respect to continuous learning was that they were kept busy running their enterprises and at times it was difficult to spare the time to attend training as in most instances they were hands on in business. It was established that training offered by colleges lacked practical aspects, hence, the government needed to relook into entrepreneurial training through speeding up the establishment of entrepreneurial hubs to enable skills practice for entrepreneurs.

Quantitative Results

Regression Analysis

A multiple regression was performed on the dependent variable and independent variables. The regression was done to ascertain if there was a linear relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable in order to check if the study’s hypotheses could be accepted or not. The outcome from this analysis is shown on table 1 and the subsequent two tables.

Table 1. Model Summary

| Model Summary | Change Statistics |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | R Square Change | F Change | df1 |
| .576 | .940 | .496 | 14.982 | 3 |

Predictors: (Constant), KS, CL, KS
Dependent Variable: ED

ANOVA

| Model | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|---------------|----|-------------|---|------|
| 1     | Regression    | 39,707 | 3 | 13.236 | 14.982 | .000b |
|       | Residual      | 94,527 | 107 | .883 | |
| Total | 134,234 | 110 | |

Dependent Variable: ED
Predictors: (Constant), KS, CL, KS

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|-------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---|------|
| B     | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1     | (Constant) | 1.903 | .372 | 5.110 | .000 |
| KS    | .171 | .074 | .199 | 2.311 | .023 |
| CL    | .131 | .071 | .155 | 1.843 | .038 |
| KS    | .303 | .067 | .400 | 4.543 | .000 |

The best model fitted for the relationship was as follows:

ED = 0.303 KS + 0.131CL+0.171KSt +1.903, where KS is knowledge sharing, CL is continuous learning and KSt knowledge strategy. All the independent variables have a positive constant suggesting a positive relationship to Enterprise development for the significant variables.

Table 1 is the regression model fitted showed a linear relationship between Dependent Variable (Enterprise Development) and the independent Variables (Knowledge Strategy, Knowledge Sharing and Continuous Learning ). The model shows an F-value=14.988; P-value= 0.00 , F-value is bigger than P-value in the model above hence the independent variables explain a significant linear relationship with enterprise development.

Knowledge strategy (KSt)
Knowledge Sharing (KS)  R2 = 0.596
Continuous Learning (CL)
The results showed that the coefficient of determination $r^2$ is 59%, meaning that the three independent variables knowledge strategy, knowledge sharing and continuous learning explains 59% of the total variability on the enterprise development. 41% of variability might be due to multi-collinearity between variables and other variables not investigated in this study.

**T-test**

The independent variables t-values on the model were all significant with P value less that Alpha 0.05 at 95% confidence interval as shown below:

For knowledge strategy significance of t-value = 2.311 p-value 0.023 < 0.05 significance and 95% confidence level. For continuous learning significance of t-value = 1.843 p-value 0.038 < 0.05 significance and 95% confidence level. For knowledge sharing significance of t-test = 4.543 p-value 0.000 < 0.05 significance and at 95% confidence level.

**Kruskal-Wallis H test**

The Kruskal-Wallis H test, though weaker than the one-way ANOVA was performed in order to deal with the more than three conditions that impacted enterprise development namely: knowledge management, knowledge sharing, continuous learning, government policy and knowledge strategy. The result are shown on tables:

| Table 2a: Kruskal-Wallis H Test for Differences of KM Practices Against Age Categories |
|---|
| **Test Statistics**
| Knowledge Creation | Knowledge Sharing | Continuous Learning | Knowledge Strategy | Enterprise Development | Government Policy |
| Chi-Square | 1.482 | 2.863 | 2.942 | 4.815 | 4.647 | 3.953 |
| Df | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Asymp. Sig. | .830 | .581 | .568 | .307 | .325 | .412 |
| a. Kruskal Wallis Test |
| b. Grouping Variable: age |

**Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05**

The test in Table 2b examines the size of differences between the participant age categories in the five knowledge management practices. Non-parametric (Kruskal Wallis test) procedure was performed on the data set. The results show that none of the five knowledge management practices (KM) and Enterprise development statistically vary according to age categories of the age of the women entrepreneur. This means that adoption of KM strategies does not statistically differ according to age.

**KM Practices Against Business Sector**

It was important to examine the size of the differences between the business sector categories in the five knowledge management practices in order to inform decision making for the government and non-governmental organisation who might be willing to offer assistance to this sector.

| Table 3: Kruskal-Wallis H Test for Differences of KM Practices Against Business Sector |
|---|
| **Test Statistics**
| Knowledge Creation | Knowledge Sharing | Continuous Learning | Knowledge Strategy | Enterprise Development | Government Policy |
| Chi-Square | 1.038 | 2.188 | .932 | 5.731 | 2.478 | 8.228 |
| Df | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Asymp. Sig. | .792 | .534 | .818 | .125 | .479 | .042 |
| a. Kruskal Wallis Test |
| b. Grouping Variable: sector |

Table 3 shows the outcome of the examination of the size of differences between the categories of business sector in the five knowledge management practices. Non-parametric (Kruskal Wallis) procedure was performed on the data set. The results show that one out of five organisational development practices (GP) statistically vary according to business sector. Kruskal Wallis test shows that knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, knowledge strategy, continuous learning and enterprise development do not statistically vary between and within groups according to business sector category. Only government policy intervention varies between and within groups according to business sector.
Knowledge Sharing and Enterprise Development

**H1.** There is a positive relationship between knowledge sharing and divapreneurship development in Zimbabwe.

The following sub-sections focus specifically on the correlations of the overall Knowledge sharing (KS) and enterprise development (ED) and examine how the defined prevalent KS practices correlate with them as shown on table 5.

### Table 5: Knowledge sharing and enterprise development correlations

|            | KS          | ED          |
|------------|-------------|-------------|
| **KS**     | Pearson Correlation | 1           | .274**     |
|            | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0           | .002       |
|            | N            | 520         | 520        |
| **ED**     | Pearson Correlation | .274**     | 1          |
|            | Sig. (2-tailed) | .002       |            |
|            | N            | 510         | 510        |

****, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

KS-Knowledge sharing
ED-Enterprise development

Consulting media resources such as the internet for business knowledge (KS3) was positively associated with having the organisation increasing the number of branches (r=0.21, p-value=0.026). Organisations which strategically disseminate knowledge (KS2) were associated with having existed for more than 3 years (r=0.19 p-value=0.04). A significant association was also found between KS2 and KS1, KS2 and KS5 with organisations that have plans to expand operations (ED5). Women enterprises that cited relationship between expert business knowledge and attainment of competitive advantage (KS1) were significantly associated with expansion of operations (ED5)(r=0.223, p=0.01). Similar results were also found between KS2 and ED5 as well with KS5 and ED5. The highest correlation coefficient was found between KS5 and ED5 (r=0.31, p=0.001). A weak but positive correlation between knowledge sharing and enterprise development were found with a correlation coefficient (r=0.274, r=0.002).

### Knowledge Strategy and Enterprise Development

**H2.** There is a positive relationship between knowledge strategy and divapreneurship development in Zimbabwe.

The following sub-sections focus specifically on the correlations of the overall Knowledge strategy (KStra) and enterprise development (ED) and examine how the defined prevalent KStra practices correlate with them. The results are shown on table 6.
Women enterprises that leveraged expert knowledge and attainment of competitive advantage (KStra1) were significantly associated with having plans to expand operations (ED5) with a correlation coefficient $r = 0.33$, $p$-value $= 0.001$. Results indicate that women enterprises that indicated knowledge is strategically disseminated in their organisation were correlated with having plans for business expansion ($r=0.21$, $p$-value=$0.025$). A positive correlation was found between an organisation that uses technology to store knowledge (KStra3) and having plans to expand operations ($r=0.23$, $p=0.014$). Having marketing information made available to employees (KStra4) practice was not associated with any of the enterprise development constructs. Organisations that have a vision and mission that are known by employees (KStra5) were highly significantly associated with expansion of business ($r=0.49$, $p=0.001$). Overall correlation coefficient between knowledge strategy and enterprise development was weak but positive at $r=0.27$, $p=0.003$ (table 6).

**Continuous Learning and Enterprise Development**

The following sub-sections focus specifically on the correlations of the overall continuous learning (CL) and enterprise development (ED) and examine how the defined prevalent CL practices correlate with them. The results are shown on table 7 below:

| ED | Pearson Correlation | Sig. (2-tailed) | N  |
|----|---------------------|-----------------|----|
|    |                     |                 | 510|
| CL | Pearson Correlation |                 |    |
|    |                     |                 | 510|

**Continuous Learning and Enterprise Development Correlations**

Entrepreneurial training equipped respondents with business knowledge (CL) was significantly associated with business expansion ($r=0.36$, $p=0.001$). Going through seminars and workshops (CL3), continuously updating business knowledge due to the changing business environment (CL5) and women facing start up challenges due to lack of business information (CL6) were not significantly associated with any of the enterprise development constructs as shown on table 8.

Government Policy and Enterprise Development

**H3.** There is a positive relationship between government policy and divapreneurship development in Zimbabwe?

The following sub-sections focus specifically on the correlations of the overall Government policy (GP) and Enterprise development (ED) and examine how the defined prevalent GP practices correlate with them. The results are shown on table 8:

| GP | Pearson Correlation | Sig. (2-tailed) | N  |
|----|---------------------|-----------------|----|
|    |                     |                 | 510|

Understanding government policy for empowering women SMEs (GP1) was weakly but positively correlated with plans for business expansion (ED5), ($r=0.27$, $p=0.003$). However, it was not statistically significant. Government policy of providing tax holidays to encourage start-ups was associated with plans of business expansion ($r=0.269$, $p=0.004$). Overall correlation coefficient between GP constructs and enterprise development constructs was ($r=0.15$, $p=0.10$) as shown in Results show that GP was associated with enterprise development, but it was not statistically significant.

**FINDINGS**

Knowledge Management Strategy Implementation

The results on the knowledge management aspects from the findings of the study revealed that knowledge management strategies are key in attaining a competitive advantage in line with findings by Bratianu (2015). Some of the findings were as follows:
Knowledge Management Practices

The knowledge management practices construct tested four aspects: knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, knowledge acquisition and knowledge application with respect to enterprise development. Results revealed that respondents were involved in all those KM practices activities. According to Bratianu (2015), the ability to create new knowledge is often at the centre of the organisation’s competitive advantage. These findings implied that as a result of the adoption of knowledge management practices divapreneurs had lesser business challenges compared to those who had not adopted knowledge management, hence, their survival and growth to more than three years. According to Wiig’s knowledge management cycle (1993), the purpose of knowledge management was identified as being an effort to make the enterprise intelligent through facilitating the creation, accumulation, deployment and use of quality knowledge. Those who had adopted KM practices had expanded their knowledge through formal education and training. Their sharing of experience was through networks.

Knowledge Creation

Knowledge is created through practice, collaboration, interaction and education, as the different knowledge types are shared and converted (Wiig, 1993, King, 2016). Knowledge creation is also supported by relevant information and data which can improve decisions and serve as building blocks in the creation of new knowledge. Given that the results showed that most of the participants shared experiences and had attended formal entrepreneurial education, it was clear that the respondents were involved in knowledge creation to a certain extent. The SECI model by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1996) shows that various learning processes occur through interaction. Collaboration through networking that the respondents were involved in was made possible through social and electronic media in which all respondents were engaged in.

Knowledge Sharing

It was established that 84% of the respondents had organisations that encouraged the sharing of knowledge and experiences and this was in line with the assertion by Polonyi (1966) that knowledge and information are vital strategic tools for the attainment of competitive advantage. Alavi and Leidner (2001) allude to coding and sharing of best practices, the creation of corporate knowledge directories and the creation of knowledge networks. Most respondents had no challenges with networking and getting access to knowledge. Divas made use of the internet of things, Facebook and social media as well as WhatsApp were found to be amongst the most popular platforms. Owners of hair salons concurred that one had the option of either undergoing experiential learning on the job or going to the Polytechnics for formal training, which apparently was said to be a more expensive option. In sharing knowledge, Nonaka (1994) alludes that it is important to consider the environment in which knowledge sharing takes place.

Knowledge Acquisition and Application

The study revealed that 74% of the respondents concurred that knowledge once acquired, was disseminated to areas needing it for use in solving business problems and also for use in decision making in line with assertions by theorists such as Wiig et al. (1993).

CONCLUSION

There is a compelling business case for the use of a knowledge management strategy and government policy to ensure divapreneurship development based on the empirical evidence gathered in this study. A strategy is a means of making clear-cut choices about how to outperform competitors and achieving superior profitability. It was clear from evidence gathered that positioning the enterprise in the market place was not easy due to bottlenecks alluded to earlier, thus making a wrong strategic move could waste an enterprise’s resources and put the survival of the entity at risk, hence most women enterprises failed to survive. It was therefore important to attend trade shows and other trade events to market products and services as well as to collaborate and network with other organisations. Capitalising on opportunities to grow the business is a strategy that requires planning and commitment of financial resources. Hence, without strategic thinking, divas’s business ventures would remain small and insignificant and would not join the main stream economy. Efficiency requires performing value chain activities differently than rivals and building competencies and resource capabilities that are not matched. It was clearly demonstrated in this study that divapreneurship development requires a systematic approach and commitment from various players and that the divas themselves needed to embrace the divatude, be determined to succeed through being driven, focussed on winning and results driven (action-oriented). These personality traits had to be embraced by divas if divapreneurship is to become a reality in Zimbabwe.

Universities emerged as having a big role to play in the nurturing of divapreneurship through the offering of entrepreneurial education that is tailor made to suit the Zimbabwean turbulent environment. The adoption of a knowledge management strategy was found to be critical in view of the nature of global competition which was now leveraging KM strategies and technological innovations such as big data analytical tools to attain a competitive advantage. Divas need to adopt well-executed competitive approaches based on the employment of knowledge management strategies, with government policy providing the enabling environment in which women businesses could flourish. The implication of these findings for divapreneurship development was that it was important to have a systematic approach to managing a business, through using tried and tested business strategies such as combining strategic thinking and knowledge management practices which gives direction to an enterprise. Constant training was found to be also important. An intensive entrepreneurship training programme should be implemented by government deliberately targeting women with universities being the nexus, to impart business knowledge and bring about participation of women in the main stream economy. This intensive training should be spearheaded by universities to ensure that:

1. Divas are conscious of the importance of having permanent business premises where they operate from;
2. Divas have to adopt best business management practices through registering their operations and maintain up to date books of accounts;
3. Divas should develop network they could leverage on such as participating in trade shows to showcase their products;
4. Divas should comply with statues and local authority by-laws in conducting business instead of taking short cuts;
5. Divas should adopt modern business practices such as knowledge management strategies, big data analytics and technological innovations. Thus, divas needed to keep track of contemporary trends and follow industry trends.
6. Divas should conduct businesses in a clean environment through adherence to quality management principles.
7. Divas should grow their businesses annually and attain return on investment.
8. Divas should be continually creative and innovative so as to attain a distinct competitive advantage;
9. Divas should contribute towards national development through joining the main stream economy;
10. Divas’ progress should be closely monitored to ensure that the fund is secure and revolves to benefit more communities.
   Successful implementation of the above steps is expected to bring about the divatude and result in divapreneurship development.

Recommendations of the study

There was need for the government to adopt some business models that have been successfully implemented elsewhere in third world countries such as Kenya, Ghana and Uganda, where the economy is driven by and supports women entrepreneurship. Encouraging communities to come together to pool their financial and knowledge resources together for mutual development is one lesson that could be learned from other developing countries. The study made the following recommendations:

1. There should be a system of reviewing the existing regulatory frameworks, and making necessary adjustments to promote the growth of women businesses. Licensing of businesses should be reviewed in order to cut down on the bottlenecks. Pro-women policies must be crafted and implemented to promote divapreneurship development.
2. Women business support in the form of business premises, infrastructural support as well as technological support is critical for divapreneur growth.
3. Some Micro-finance credit schemes should be sponsored by government to disburse financial support for women owned enterprises. Loans or seed financing from government should be availed to capacitate the financial sector to avail loans to women’s businesses.
4. Higher learning institutions should spearhead advanced training programmes for the development of managerial and technical skills among women, thereby enhancing their bargaining power. These women should be thoroughly equipped with adequate business skills especially on marketing related issues, since it is a major challenge in this sector.
5. Development agents such as women empowerment groups, Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Gender and Community development and Small to Medium Enterprises as well as Universities should embark on a massive drive to assist women develop and nature their business ideas.
6. Non- governmental agencies and the private sector should work with the government to sponsor training on idea generation and projects through incubation hubs for women. A vetting exercise should be put in place on the basis of production of a business proposal that will place women into various categories for training needs identification.
7. The private sector should be part of the consortium driving women entrepreneurial development, through providing various support services with regard to information dissemination and capacity building.
8. Development agents should play a fruitful role in value chain addition, offering business consultancy services with the Universities carrying out applied cutting edge research on business management in volatile environments like Zimbabwe and providing feedback to the stakeholders. Universities should be engaged to come up with local solutions to business problems.
9. There should be policy consistence, as the current scenario in Zimbabwe is that its risk profile is increasing because of policy inconsistencies. There is need for consultation of business before policies are crafted in particular those policies that affect divas.
10. There is need for local content protection, which will enable local women’s enterprises to have a guaranteed market for its products.
11. There is need to nip corruption in the bud as well as institute fiscal discipline by the government to promote business development.
12. It was noted that there was serious fiscal indiscipline in the economy which had negative impact on the performance of the business sector, hence, there was need to bring about a paradigm shift to enforce fiscal discipline.
13. Adequate, reliable, affordable and sustainable infrastructure should be availed to divas for their operational stability. The government through its policy should improve governance and tackle corruption, in particular at the border posts to arrest corruption, which had adversely affected the operations of divas as an extra cost on imports. ZIMRA also had too many tax heads which affected business efficiencies, and this was clear from the reported surpassing of their revenue targets.
14. Women business development was affected by lack of foreign currency due to the inability by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe to regulate currency. Hence the government needs to capitalise the financial sector to avail loans to women businesses.

Recommendations for future research

The recommendations for future research stems from the limitations of this current study. This study confined itself to those women enterprises that had survived for at least three years as opposed to those that were at start-up stage or still anticipating starting an entity. It would be interesting to incorporate the women entrepreneurs who are in rural areas so that their challenges are magnified. Rural women are likely to face different growth challenges from those faced by their urban counterparts. It would also be interesting to investigate the extent to which these women have embraced technological innovations in their business operations.

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