

## Digital Female Entrepreneurs in South Africa: Drivers and Relationship to Economic Development

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**Abstract :** Popular discourse touts entrepreneurship as a universal solution for underdevelopment, unemployment, and poverty. Moreover, claims are made that women and other disadvantaged groups can achieve material and personal success through digital entrepreneurship. This paper examines the potential of digital technology in entrepreneurial ventures to stimulate economic growth for marginalized groups and communities. Although digital entrepreneurship is hailed as a means to empower under-resourced and socially marginalized people, these opportunities still exist within the confines of existing social and cultural practices. The perspectives of female digital entrepreneurs in developing countries are sorely understudied, particularly concerning an understanding of the complex underlying socio-cultural factors impeding women's entrepreneurial behaviors. This qualitative study, guided by a feminist phenomenological perspective, focused on the experiences of digital female entrepreneurs in the Western Cape of South Africa. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews and analyzed through the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach to determine the relationships between digital entrepreneurship and structural and agential enabling conditions. Findings show that digital entrepreneurship is not a panacea for economic growth in marginalized groups and communities and highlight the importance of addressing socio-cultural gender inequality to enable successful entrepreneurial activity. The paper concludes with recommendations for specialized training initiatives aimed at female entrepreneurs that address internalized constraints and barriers that keep women subservient and measures to shift gender and power beliefs. The outcome will benefit the stimulation of gender-specific public policies to develop a successful digital start-up ecosystem further.

**Keywords :** digital innovation, female digital entrepreneurs, feminist phenomenology, gender, marginalised communities

**Conference Title :** ICSEI 2020 : International Conference on Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation

**Conference Location :** London, United Kingdom

**Conference Dates :** May 21-22, 2020