



A perspective on the female entrepreneurial market in Ireland

The qualitative case study about how women have remained in the Irish formal market during the first political statement on entrepreneurship in Ireland.

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Abstract

Purpose: Explore female entrepreneurship in Ireland since the implementation of the Irish National Political Declaration (2015) to understand how women have remained as entrepreneurs in the formal entrepreneurial market. As Brush, de Bruin, and Welter (2009) define the 5Ms structure (market, money, management, maternity and meso / environment), female entrepreneurship needs to be supported by specific strategies that provide favorable conditions for women to undertake business.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Qualitative research and case of study, through in-depth interviews with 10 women entrepreneurs in Ireland and official documents about female entrepreneurship indicators.

Findings: The female profile of Irish entrepreneurship is by opportunity, where most entrepreneurial women are not included in government actions during the first statement on entrepreneurship. Female entrepreneurs have used personal resources in their businesses and tend not to invest in expansion, even when they see potential, due to lack of guidance, understanding governmental programs could have provided better trajectories to them. These women prioritize their professional careers through entrepreneurship, rather than maternity and in general they understand the need of financial stability to have a child and time to dedicate to the family. This study shows that female entrepreneurs in the Irish market have more or less found the balance to conduct their businesses successfully and to remain active entrepreneurs.

Originality/Value: Female Entrepreneurship has been implemented as a global employability strategy, conditioning women to socio-cultural factors to undertake business. Professional and family life factors that are incorporated into institutional theory in Ireland, where the entrepreneurial market is under the first Irish National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship, as a good governance strategy.

Keywords: Female, Entrepreneurship, Ireland, Entrepreneurial.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurs professionally do business on their own. One may be an innovator who has the objective of undertaking business, and one may operate their own business (Sauer and Schulte, 2014). The importance of female entrepreneurs in society is widely recognized in studies that provide their contribution on an ongoing basis (Woetzel *et al.*, 2015; Watson, Gatewood, and Lewis, 2014; Carter, Anderson, and Shaw, 2001). Minority entrepreneurs can include those who do not belong to the majority population, and this group occasionally includes businesses run by women (Chaganti and Greene, 2002). Entrepreneurship trending globally in contemporary society, based on many researchers including Bhatia, Sing, and Sriram's (2019) and Moghadam and Rafieian (2019), focus on how the presence of females benefits the economy, by increasing employability and per capita income indicators.

Ali, Kelley, and Levie (2020) define entrepreneurship as the oldest business-related activity that addresses market opportunities, or who innovate goods and services. Nowadays entrepreneurship can be recognized in corporations where an entrepreneur develops new activities for the main employers, through the development or launch of adequate services and the creation of new business units, establishments or subsidiaries. Entrepreneurial women have higher scales of innovative behaviour, just as they are the ones with the highest level of education (Hoogendoorn, Van der Zwan, and Thurik, 2020). This research on female entrepreneurship in Ireland discusses women who have developed companies in diversified segments, as creators and owners of their own companies.

The unique idiosyncrasies of women tend to relate to family values, where women are more often immersed (Hughes *et al.*, 2012), strengthening the theories of the 5 "Ms" (market, money, management, maternity and meso/macro-environment) of female entrepreneurship (Brush, de Bruin, and Welter, 2009). This helps interconnect professional and family life for more so for female entrepreneurs (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020). Entrepreneurship is recognized as an employability strategy in many countries. Women who seek to undertake businesses are conditioned to socio-cultural and social incentive factors (Longoria, 2018).

Socio-cultural factors contribute to the business strategies of female entrepreneurs, based on the structure of the 5Ms as a premise for female entrepreneurship socially incorporated into institutional theory (Cullen, 2020). The interrelation between the quality of governance and entrepreneurship is present in the discussion of political research affirming formal entrepreneurship needs the stimulation of appropriate economic institutions, policies, laws and rules. An understanding of property rights is also important in order to formalize entrepreneurship and contribute to institutional formality (Thai and Turkina, 2014).

Governments of many countries, including Ireland, encourage local businesses and female entrepreneurs as a strategy in leveraging sustainable economic growth (Njoku, 2017). Despite the recognition of the importance of females since the first political statement on entrepreneurship in Ireland published in 2014 (Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI, 2018a), there are no support programs specific to this group (Birdthistle, 2019) and there is a growing number of females, who are able to contribute directly to local businesses if supported through a support program for female entrepreneurs.

As a strategy, female-owned businesses are responsible for economic growth and job creation (Mari, Poggesi, and De Vita, 2016). For example, and 32% of entrepreneurs in the European Union are female (European Union News, 2019). The number of female entrepreneurs is growing worldwide, in both emerging and developed economies. Thus, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of the influence of government policies on formal female entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial formality impacts the economy and depends on effective public policies. This understanding can improve public policy efforts to support female entrepreneurship.

Ireland is in The Developed Countries List 2020, as The Human Development Index (HDI) in Ireland is 0.942, which positions it as the third-most developed country (World Population Review, 2020). Ireland has moved up the list rapidly in the last five years with an 8% decrease in income inequality over the past few years and has been improving gender equality. Despite legislation aimed at gender equality in Irish society, there has been no structural change to support working mothers, on account of demand for exemplarity in their professional conduct, and extensive workload tends to hinder the female relationship between motherhood and paid work (O'Hagan, 2018).

In the space of a decade, female entrepreneurs in Ireland still point out that they have more family responsibilities than men, and they seek a balance between professional and personal spheres through entrepreneurship (Nevins and Hamouda, 2019 and Anne and Eileen, 2010). Men are one and a half times more likely to be entrepreneurs and women still have seen fewer opportunities to start a business in Ireland than men (GEM, 2018), these bring a question, as women in Ireland occupy the fifth highest position in European entrepreneurship and how public policies support the needs of female entrepreneurs in Ireland.

Political strategies to support entrepreneurship and its understanding of the country's female and socio-cultural growth substantiate opportunities for improvement in relation to the Irish National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship (DBEI, 2020a) as a public policy for the sustainability of the Irish economy. This policy can be understood as a strategy to provide better gender equality, and this research aims to explore female entrepreneurship indicators since the implementation of the Irish National Political Declaration (2015), to understand how women have remained as entrepreneurs in the formal entrepreneurial market. As Brush *et al.* (2009) states in the 5Ms structure, female entrepreneurship needs to be supported by specific strategies that provide favourable conditions for women to manage businesses.

Exploring the socio-cultural reality of female entrepreneurship, this case study research is based on a mono method of qualitative research and data collection through in-depth interviews and reviewing existing information on female entrepreneurship indicators in this nation with 10 active female entrepreneurs in Ireland. The acts of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing as a strategy for data analysis are conducted as a case description (Gog, 2015; Kohlbacher, 2006) to deepen knowledge and reach a perspective about how female entrepreneurs have remained in the Irish formal market during the first political statement on entrepreneurship in Ireland. Females, regardless of effective public policies, seek their space in the entrepreneurial market and have still more or less found the balance to conduct their businesses successfully, even without prioritizing their personal lives. This shows evidence of Ireland's promising economy.

Through this case study research, the female entrepreneurs are used as a unity of analysis and range between 26 and 49 years old, mostly starting their entrepreneurial activities by opportunity since 2012. They had other professional activities and aimed to increase autonomy and flexibility as entrepreneurs. All respondents have a college degree, although they do not

always choose to perform their professional activities. However, these women did not understand entrepreneurship as a priority option, they could not identify government initiatives and both to start their activities and to stay active they use personal resources. They also tend to postpone maternity and family plans until they feel financially stable. These women do not understand gender co-responsibility as a social characteristic and do not recognize family or social support to find the balance between their personal and professional lives. These are the main perspectives found on the phenomenon of female entrepreneurship in Ireland during the term of the first policy determined for the sector, pointing out the importance of public policies to encourage entrepreneurial activities and support the general public.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

The review of literature aims to contextualize female entrepreneurship in a global view of the academic field through the 5Ms as conditions for female entrepreneurship activities. Based on the importance of institutions and good governance as support for female entrepreneurship, the research explores female entrepreneurship in developed countries such as Ireland, which has had a relevant performance of initiators in the last 5 years.

2.1 Contextualization of female entrepreneurship

Originally, entrepreneurship is defined as the creation of a company that is for-profit, non-profit, social, ecological, or of various other sorts including public funding enterprises (Orser and Elliott, 2015). Entrepreneurship in current times has a broader and more comprehensive concept, and it is not just restricted to becoming the owner of a business. It also includes contributing ideas and actions in new directions (Ali *et al.*, 2020), which is important for both employee and employer (Burton, Fairlie, and Siegel, 2019).

Male entrepreneurs show greater entrepreneurial tendencies than women, although differences in personality, gender, family origin and stages are associated with businesses (Burton *et al.*, 2019; Aldrich and Cliff, 2003). When thinking about entrepreneurs gender-wise, the way female entrepreneurs relate to their communities is something of frequent study (Godwyn and Stoddard, 2011). Based on research developed in the academical field, parameters are influenced by time and a critical issue for individual study is the influence of social context (Burton *et al.*, 2019; Chowdhury and Audretsch, 2014). Nevertheless, research over the years comprehends that women economically contribute more than men through their earnings. This is not a gender-related difference, and from a social psychology perspective, generalization is a fundamental error (Godwyn and Stoddard, 2011). Therefore, understanding entrepreneurship in each economy cannot be substantiated without identifying gender and socio-cultural contexts.

We need to consider the history of females throughout society, their participation in communities, their responsibility to manage the home and their ability to provide resources for the family (Godwyn and Stoddard, 2011). They had become an entrepreneurial minority, and by

going in the direction of social justice, based on their social characteristics, women have found more innovative conditions than men to support the community (Godwyn and Stoddard, 2011). Although female contributions to the economy are positively recognised, they do have faced social disadvantages in relation to opportunities achieved by men and only one in three businesses are female-owned (Meunier, Krylova, and Ramalho, 2017). This generates a social inequality that motivates organizations to adopt an intersectoral approach, as defined by the United Nations, to support women to stay out of minority positions in society (United Nations, 2020; Forson, 2006).

Business-related gender inequality is evident throughout the globe but can be seen especially in smaller economies, where the female potential for opening new ventures is still less than the male (Meunier, Krylova, and Ramalho, 2017). Female entrepreneurs still intake less profit in comparison to the number of goods produced (Pinkovetskaia *et al.*, 2019). According to a study by Woetzel *et al.* (2015), ditching the exploitation of female potential and ensuring that women contribute economically in the same way that men do can increase global GDP by 26%. This evidence suggests that most minority entrepreneurs' companies are self-financed and only a portion of them receive venture capital. The way the policies support minorities and directly affect socio-economic indicators need to be properly reassessed (O'Gorman, 2015).

Entrepreneurs are innovators who undertake or operate a business (Sauer and Schulte, 2014). The importance of female entrepreneurs in society is widely recognized in studies that provide their contribution on an ongoing basis (Woetzel *et al.*, 2015; Watson *et al.*, 2014; Carter *et al.*, 2001). In the past decade, female business owners have been growing as an entrepreneurial population around the world (Emile, 2011), contributing significantly to the global economic environment (Brush *et al.*, 2009; Brush *et al.*, 2006). Despite the recognized importance of the female entrepreneurial presence, research on the phenomenon of female entrepreneurship shows a significant gender gap (Brush *et al.*, 2009). As presented, although women are business owners and entrepreneurs in many nations, performing academic research on female entrepreneurship creates an opportunity for improvement and content aggregation.

"Fear of success, adversity to risk and failure to delegate" are dominant themes in discussions on gender issues in terms of decision making and performance of the company, in the ambit of female corporate identity (Orser and Elliott, 2015, p. 1). As psychological gaps do

not justify women's economic progress, it is necessary to understand female capital as an asset in its ability to aggregate knowledge, roles and expectations, values and behaviour. These assets have social and economic value (Orser and Elliott, 2015). After all, female entrepreneurship has resignified the understanding of a successful business beyond the measurement of value. Entrepreneurial women tend to reframe the perspective of profit, relating the idea to that of personal values and social relationships (Godwyn and Stoddard, 2011).

The cultural, educational and numerous other differences significantly affect a woman's entrepreneurial performance (Emile, 2011). The unique idiosyncrasies of women tend to be more connected to family values, in which women are more often immersed (Hughes *et al.*, 2012), strengthening the theories of 5Ms of female entrepreneurship as aforementioned (Brush *et al.*, 2009). The link between professional and family life as an entrepreneur, particularly for female entrepreneurs can be seen in figure 1 below (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020). Entrepreneurship is recognized as an employability strategy in many countries, however, women who dare to undertake this lifestyle are conditioned to socio-cultural and social incentive factors (Longoria, 2018).

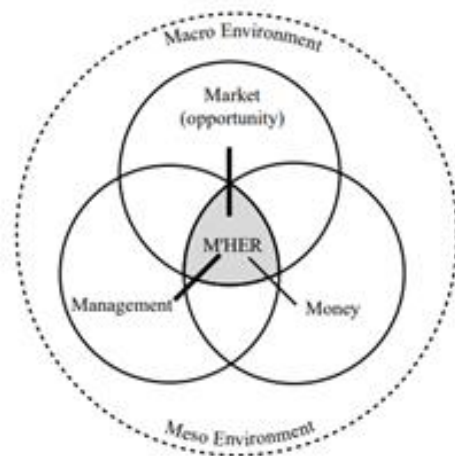


Figure 1. Framework for female entrepreneurship (Brush *et al.*, 2009).

2.2 The 5 “Ms” as conditions for female entrepreneurship activities

In the entrepreneurial environment, there is an existing structure known as the “3Ms” necessary for entrepreneurs to start companies organized around three basic constructions - market, money and management (Brush *et al.*, 2009; Bates, Jackson III, and Johnson Jr., 2007). This structure contains the needs to start and maintain an active business and they are interrelated and are critical for the sustainability of enterprises. Thus, the 3Ms can be seen as a foundation for any business that may not be compatible with minority companies that have specific barriers (Bates *et al.*, 2007). Unfortunately, due to gender inequality, women are classified as an entrepreneurial minority (Forson, 2006), and often do not have access to these initial structures.

From observing the strategies of female entrepreneurs, "maternity" and "meso/macro-environment" are added to revalue and mediate the "3Ms" (Brush *et al.*, 2009). Suggesting a structure of "5 Ms", Brush *et al.* (2009) proposed a study of female entrepreneurship respecting their specific needs. The structure needed to be expanded to 5 Ms, as there were several existing field studies that proved the working style of women could not be compared with the working style of men.

When expanding the concept from the 3Ms to 5Ms, Brush *et al.* (2009) present “motherhood” as a metaphor for the family values that tend to influence women in larger proportions than men, as explained by Jennings and McDougald (2007), not necessarily because all women are mothers, but because of the more attentive relationship between women and their families. It is also scientifically proven that the family (Pathak, Goltz, and Buche, 2013) is still an unequal dynamic system, where women are still overworking.

Brush *et al.* (2009) conceptualise the “macro/meso environment” as concerning variables that are beyond the market. These are environmental factors such as social expectations, patterns of behaviour and cultural norms, exemplifying this definition as the media's representations of what a businesswoman would be. The macro-environment concerns national policies, strategies, cultural and economic influences; while the meso environment encompasses local policies, services and organizations (Brush *et al.*, 2009). Women are less likely to be entrepreneurs, although more qualified for the formal market (Daniel, Henley, and Anwar, 2019; Thébaud, 2015). In Europe, female entrepreneurs tend to operate smaller and less dynamic businesses than

men (Sanita, 2019; Thébaud, 2015). Women entrepreneurs are more likely to find themselves in less capitalised sectors such as services, commerce, education and health, with less potential to generate significant sustainable income (Daniel *et al.*, 2019; Sanita, 2019; Thébaud, 2015).

Adding to this theory, both motherhood and the meso-macro-environment strongly interconnect within the activities of female entrepreneurship. Depending on the environment and institution, as pointed out by Brush *et al.* (2009), a simplified 3Ms structure is defective if it does not understand that entrepreneurs, both male and female, face challenges to access the markets, money and management (human and organizational capital). The 3Ms are vital for allowing the flow of general entrepreneurship, and for females, they need to be combined with maternity and the meso-macro environment.

According to Humbert and Brindley (2015), motherhood is a metaphor that represents female family values within the meso/macro-environment. The subject of maternity tends to be more relatable with the female population, and this link with motherhood causes the meso/macro aspects (Brush *et al.*, 2009) to measure female business activities differently. The constant comparison with male business activities (Humbert and Brindley, 2015) may not be suitable.

Although males and females have similar business management experiences, both genders encounter very different experiences within the micro, meso or macro context. (Humbert and Brindley, 2015; Brush *et al.*, 2009). These differences are based on social arrangements that influence motherhood and meso/macro environments as a neutral character for men (Humbert and Brindley, 2015; Brush *et al.*, 2009). For example, as mentioned by Humbert and Brindley (2015), the female perception and behaviour of risk are very different to that of the male's, because in relation to socioeconomic context, women tend to have more negative answers from the institutions and it influences how they manage their lives and businesses. The meso and macro environment can interfere with the decision-making of female entrepreneurs. The macro-environment cannot always be controlled by females, and they may also feel unequal within a male-dominated environment (Brush *et al.*, 2009). This statement exemplifies studies that prove the negative experiences of female entrepreneurs within financial institutions and society in general (Brush *et al.*, 2009).

Brush *et al.* (2009) point out that social values implicitly define the establishment of female entrepreneurship as less likely as a result of maternal and macro-environmental aspects that demand family and domestic responsibilities. Accordingly, the numbers of opportunities correlate with the environment in which entrepreneurship occurs, which may be a disadvantage for women. Social standards influence the self-perception of entrepreneurs, which also impact how women perceive themselves in this context (Brush *et al.*, 2009). Building a business as a market opportunity is related to multiple aspects and can be stimulated by third parties who appear as support (Fletcher, 2006). Signalling the importance of women's self-confidence in social arrangements for the perception of entrepreneurial opportunities, as well as external stimuli can contribute to the understanding of these opportunities.

The supportive role of the family impacts identifying market opportunities. If the entrepreneur has strong commitments to family relationships, there is a smaller chance of professional interaction, which may interfere with the growth prospects, emergence and even business continuity (Brush *et al.*, 2009). In contrast, family influence can benefit by adding value and support in the search of opportunities (Brush *et al.*, 2009).

Understanding what motivates women to become an entrepreneur in the face of the challenges imposed by society inspires several types of research, and the definition of circumstances and reasons are two categories that deal with how female nature justifies the attitude of entrepreneurship (Longoria, 2018; Radović-Marković, 2013). Circumstances are extrinsic stimuli that inspire women to undertake in personal, economic, professional or family environments, while motives are intrinsic stimuli that support the perception of feelings and individual behaviour, seeking to transform unsatisfactory situations into satisfactory ones (Radović-Marković, 2013).

The environments in which female entrepreneurs start their entrepreneurial activities stem from the perspective of family support and personal problems, with the influence of economic development stages (SEDs) (Welsh, Kaciak and Thongpapanl, 2016). The relationship between SEDs and personal problems has an inverted U-shape. As problems increase with SEDs, personal problems decrease, pointing out the need for theory and practice in joint actions, based on the development of public policies. (Welsh *et al.*, 2016). The performance of companies is

related to their internal factors, structural factors in their sector of activity and also associating to general characteristics of the environment (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020; Welsh *et al.* (2016).

The performance of companies depends on factors such as its industries and the entrepreneurs' characters, as their countries of origin and background stem from different institutional, cultural, political and economic environments (Huggins and Izushi, 2015). In the initial stages, the balance between professional and family life is related to how the entrepreneurs understand the current country's economic and political conditions, and their experiences in work/company and family (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020).

Although females are actively progressing in enterprise management, they still face gender-specific obstacles, (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020; Jennings and Brush, 2013) as the negative influence of personal problems impact their work performance (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020). The work and family balance can directly interfere with female-owned business success (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020). It is up to the woman, in her social role to establish a balance in the family - work relationships (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020; Jennings and Brush, 2013; Jennings and McDougald, 2007), yet another responsibility that burdens the female entrepreneurial potential. As entrepreneurs, allocating time and resources for the various roles required by the communities are obstacles faced by women (Hundera *et al.*, 2019).

There is a correlation between the degree of family support that female entrepreneurs receive and the intensity of personal problems depending on the level of economic and political development of the country where these women manage their own businesses (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020). This shows that the influences of public policies can be an essential factor in the success of female entrepreneurship (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020). Thus, the social environment influences the professional life conditions of female entrepreneurship (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020) in multiple ways, not only in terms of family context but also in terms of regional characteristics (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020) and the specificity of each country (Welsh *et al.*, 2016; Pathak *et al.*, 2013). The interference of public policies can help women become formal entrepreneurs.

There is a correlation between female entrepreneurship indicators and the way in which national institutions support women's labour freedom, paying specific attention to gender differences (Chowdhury and Audretsch, 2014). Countries with high rates of female presence in

the labour market and higher levels of education have greater entrepreneurial activity (Chowdhury and Audretsch, 2014). As well as lower levels of corruption and more participation of women in the economy, these factors contribute to female entrepreneurship rates (Chowdhury and Audretsch, 2014). Sociocultural factors are determinant of business strategies chosen by female entrepreneurs, and the 5Ms are premises to entrepreneurship socially allied with institutional theory (Cullen, 2020). Motherhood and the meso/macro-environment influence women's entrepreneurial activity from different perspectives (Cullen, 2020).

Institutional theory is correlated with female entrepreneurship because of its contribution to the quality of entrepreneurship indicators, which identifies six critical institutional factors to make female entrepreneurship possible: regulatory frameworks; creation and dissemination of knowledge; market conditions; entrepreneurial skills; access to finance; and culture of entrepreneurship that are directly related to entrepreneurship (Cullen, 2020). Thus, female entrepreneurship is not possible without the 5Ms structured in a given society by the intercorrelation of institutions and the quality of governance implemented to support a given economy.

2.3 Institutions and good governance as support for female entrepreneurship

Female entrepreneurship can be driven by government policies as an economic strategy, and good governance is also important in the circles of scholars and policymakers (Thai and Turkina, 2014). Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2011) presents that governance is still a concept widely discussed among policymakers and researchers. This is broadly composed of rules, enforcement mechanisms and organizations. Describing governance objectively as the form of exercise in a country's economic management, in some strands harness existing rules and laws, while others further deepen justice (Kaufmann *et al.*, 2011). The concept of good governance is an institution through which a country's government is exercised and conceptually needs to be understood in the business and economics literature, as economies undergo significant and consistent institutional transformations as they mature (Thai and Turkina, 2014).

These transformations confer a character of development due to the interrelation between the quality of governance and entrepreneurship that is present in the discussion of political research (Thai and Turkina, 2014). As part of this context, formal entrepreneurship needs the stimulation of appropriate economic institutions, policies, laws and rules, as well as an understanding of property rights established and respected in order to formalize entrepreneurship and contribute to institutional formality (Thai and Turkina, 2014).

Academic literature widely tends to organize institutions into formal and informal (North, 1990). As North (1990) defines, a formal institution is like a set of political, economic and regulatory rules that facilitate commercial relations. Informal institutions are rules that were not consciously organized, but they come from information transmitted socially through the culture. Formal and informal institutions show that entrepreneurship has different qualities that specify the form of action in each society, and that society can encourage entrepreneurial activities to generate new values, understanding the aspects of its institutions.

Institutions are correlated, as informal institutions are dependent on the formal institutional environment in which new business opportunities are operated (Fuentelsaz, González and Maicas, 2019). Thinking entrepreneurship in its modalities, the stage of economic development is partially influenced by national differences that are responsible for the prevalence of types of entrepreneurship in a given location; and it is necessary to investigate the

basic institutional environment and the conditions associated with the operation of the commercial activity (Simón-Moya *et al.*, 2014). Both types of entrepreneurship include business opportunities and companies that offer new products and new and exclusive customers (Simón-Moya *et al.*, 2014).

Institutions as the structure of a society shaped by human interaction are influenced by socio-political factors, considering regulations, governance and how they are considered appropriate in each place, within their formal and informal nature (Fredström *et al.*, 2020). Fredström *et al.* (2020) by focusing his studies on the informal economy, understands that the presence or absence of regulatory institutions concerns the macro aspect and how the governance of a country is organized. Formal institutions promote informality between relationships of social groups, such as entrepreneurs, suppliers, customers, partners, subcontractors and others. Although informal companies are not registered by national measurement agencies, they still contribute to the added value, and according to Fredström *et al.* (2020), should be included in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The authors state that at a national level, an informal economy has several commercial activities and, therefore, the country's normative and cognitive institutions need to consider informal businesses in their economy.

The institution is the structure that regulates how society develops relationships and influences the economy (North, 1990). The institution's theory emerged after North (1990) addressed the disparity between economic performances that result in social and economic inequality, questioning the existence of rich and poor countries in their previous research. According to North (1990), an economic model that aims to converge the economy through equal access to information and proposals, in the full economic development of all societies, would not need any institutions. The author found that the institution and the economy are interconnected, and therefore, the way in which female participation occurs in the economy of a given country is directly related to how institutions empower the presence of this group.

Since 1990, North's institutional theory has allowed several researchers to dig deeper into entrepreneurship and its relationship with institutions, looking at social human interaction and defining competitive and cooperative relations. As formal institutions are based on official and legal aspects, informal institutions are the codes of conduct that impose limits and provide structure for life in society (North, 1990). This concept presents the definition of organization

and consists of social groups organized by identification of common objectives, such as political, economic, social and educational intentions (North, 1990). The author states that organizations influence the development of formal institutions, while also being influenced by the institutions. Interconnecting organizations and institutions can move the economy and generate institutional changes, according to North (1990). This concept underlies the understanding of female-owned companies as an organization that interferes and is influenced by formal and informal institutions.

When thinking about the functionality of the institutions that generate the economy, Omri (2020) points out that formal and informal entrepreneurship economies are generated by good governance and the interaction of financial development. These findings show that there is an impact, positive or negative, towards financial development on informal entrepreneurship (Omri, 2020). Good governance can promote actions to support formal entrepreneurship, through solutions that formalize entrepreneurial activities, bringing benefits to the local economy.

The theory on formal institutions shows that good governance guarantees effectiveness in managing corruption and the quality of government (Kaufmann *et al.*, 2011). Through the study of governance, scholars aim to understand how the state establishes formal rules that strengthen the quality of governance and encourage entrepreneurs to formalize their commercial activities (Fredström *et al.*, 2020). It is evident that a well-structured state develops better conditions for companies to be part of the formal economy, providing protection and property rights. The influence of governance quality in the informal economy can increase limitations and lower business productivity since it has no control over taxes on production and social protection due to lack of knowledge (Fredström *et al.*, 2020). When there is no congruence in the institutional condition, it is difficult to identify the search for opportunities. In an informal environment, they compete for opportunities while looking for information (Fredström *et al.*, 2020).

The main risks of governance in informality are that the authorities restrict certain activities and there is a need to negotiate with numerous informal social groups (Fredström *et al.*, 2020). By reducing entrepreneurship opportunity and increasing costs, incongruous institutions encourage entrepreneurship in need. In addition to formalizing jobs, there are additional obstacles to informality, which need to adapt to new formal rules (Fredström *et al.*, 2020). Thus, entrepreneurship by necessity is stimulated by the difficulty of meeting formal requirements,

coming from an informal market, where entrepreneurs have basic needs that need to be solved (Fredström *et al.*, 2020).

The highest rates of business opportunities are observed in countries where formal institutions are well defined (Fuentelsaz *et al.*, 2019). The relationship between formal institutions and the level of opportunity for entrepreneurship is higher in countries with a more individualistic orientation. Fredström *et al.* (2020) understand the effects of the quality of governance in the informal economy, in terms of the state's capacity and willingness to effectively establish the authority that fits the quality of governance. The implementation of high-quality governance tends to conflict with the rules of the informal market, as it increases stability, security and encourages formal entrepreneurship. However, Fredström *et al.* (2020) found that a stronger quality of governance in an economy with informal characteristics emphasizes norms and can generate rules incompatible with the existing market. This encapsulates the need to understand formal and informal institutions with the concept of institutional incongruence. This interrelation between the level of opportunity and the formal institution is strengthened when there is less uncertainty, moreover, when there is greater economic stability.

The country's entrepreneurial profile can be represented by a single type of entrepreneurship or can encompass both (Fredström *et al.*, 2020). In the business world, there are other employment options, but entrepreneurship allows for timely profitability (Fredström *et al.*, 2020), but poorer entrepreneurs have fewer options and need to generate income in any way (Fredström *et al.*, 2020). Based on previous studies, the lack of access to finance faced by entrepreneurs, mainly in minorities, is cited in most surveys as the main predictive factor for launching and developing new businesses (Omri, 2020).

Financial development influences the reduction of transaction costs for private investments, as well as reducing the revenues that can be used in public investment (Omri, 2020). Thus, reducing the transaction costs of the private sector contributes to its growth when the government develops alternative financing conditions, collecting taxes without inflation. In the case of low institutional quality, loss of income can be compensated by charging new taxes, and the infrastructure necessary for development will not be provided (Omri, 2020). Understanding the economic scenario and seeking partnerships between private and public

initiatives can positively influence governance indicators and financial development as an institutional strategy (Fredström *et al.*, 2020). When there are inadequate working conditions, informality does not generate the conditions of access necessary to seek high-quality resources and opportunities. This is the opposite in a formal economy, as the necessities may be provided through government policies (Fredström *et al.*, 2020).

On the other hand, due to the lack of data collected under the topic, informal entrepreneurship is measured by subtracting formal entrepreneurship from the total number of entrepreneurs, out of a group of all registered and unregistered companies per 1,000 working-age individuals. Following Ben Youssef, Boubaker, and Omri (2018), this can be seen in Figure 2, showing the formula for measuring formal and informal entrepreneurship.

$$\text{Formal Entp.} = \frac{\text{Number of newly registered businesses}}{\text{Working age population}}$$

$$\text{Informal Entp.} = \frac{\text{Number of Newly Registered + Unregistered Businesses}}{\text{Working age population}}$$

$$- \frac{\text{Number of newly registered businesses}}{\text{Working age population}}$$

Figure 2. Formula to measure formal and informal entrepreneurship (Omri, 2020).

Increasing economic growth can make it more possible to reduce informal entrepreneurship, which can then increase formal entrepreneurship (Omri, 2020). Based on the current literature on entrepreneurship, the macroeconomic variables associated with national rates of formal and informal entrepreneurship understand a country's wealth generates new businesses, controlling the annual growth rate of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and GDP growth. This means that the increase in formal entrepreneurship influences the reduction of informal entrepreneurship (Thai and Turkina, 2014). Informal entrepreneurship is correlated with aspects of population contingency and unemployment and is also negatively related to financial development, governance and higher education indicators (Omri, 2020). Financial development is associated with good governance, and because of this important correlation, both are huge influences towards entrepreneurship as good governance improves financial development and affects formal and informal entrepreneurship (Omri, 2020; Law and Azmani-Saini, 2012).

According to Omri (2020), there is different conduct for formality and informality in entrepreneurial activity. It is necessary to understand informal entrepreneurship, as it is always present throughout the world, regardless of the level of economic development mentioned (Thai and Turkina, 2014). Informal entrepreneurship can be perceived as immoral to society, as it may establish unethical characteristics and this cannot be easily controlled without current public policies (Omri, 2020). The concept of female empowerment and economic development alludes to reducing gender inequality and generating general economic development (Sanita, 2019). Women contribute to the process of introducing innovations in the markets by creating jobs (Brush *et al.*, 2006). Consequently, this has an impact on the environment in general and on how female entrepreneurship and the variety of institutional contexts can be a liability or an asset (Sanita, 2019). Several studies identify how good governance improves economic opportunities, benefiting society.

Formal institutions operate around laws and public policies, which guarantee the protection of property rights and gender equality. This idea of protection further encourages more entrepreneurship to occur (Sanita, 2019). This shapes how female entrepreneurs can be absorbed by the market since informal institutions face sociocultural factors that shape the relationship of the entrepreneur with career options. While formal institutions can generate opportunities, informal institutions tend to stimulate the collective and individual perception of what is necessary (Sanita, 2019).

Informal institutions are rooted in society and determine gender roles and behavioural expectations of what would be “male” or “female”, influencing female entrepreneurship in general. It is essential to observe the trends of formal and informal economic markets to understand where the female entrepreneurs of that society are (Sanita, 2019). De Bruin, Brush, and Welter (2007) affirm there is a belief of life being socially constructed, and there is a belief that men may be more inclined to pursue business opportunities. Personal perceptions are part of how entrepreneurs will be directed to reach their goal, and since women are socialized differently, they will have different responses to social stimuli (de Bruin *et al.*, 2007).

Burton *et al.* (2019) state that, after three decades of research, it is apparent that differences in personality, gender and family characteristics are associated with different commercial propensities. Institutional research on gender and entrepreneurship explains that a gender gap has

institutional differences at work-family policies, such as paid holidays by the government, investments in childcare and availability of part-time work (Thébaud, 2015). This shows evidence that the labour market, institutions and policies affect the way women undertake a business (Thébaud, 2015). In the absence of policies to support the working family, women turn to entrepreneurship to achieve autonomy and flexibility (Burton *et al.*, 2019). Research results over the past three decades highlight the disadvantages women experience within entrepreneurial environments, in terms of organizational structures, norms and practices (Burton *et al.*, 2019). Thus, it is essential to understand how institutions and good governance has stimulated female entrepreneurship in developed countries.

2.4 Female entrepreneurship in developed countries as Ireland

In developed countries, entrepreneurs tend to undertake businesses by opportunity, and it may only be a necessity if there are no other job options. Entrepreneurship opportunities are prevalent with developed European countries covering three quarters or more of female entrepreneurs. Research has indicated 73% of women starting up businesses choose this lifestyle to seek opportunities (Longoria, 2018).

Female entrepreneurs in developed countries have started their own companies as a second or third profession because they have prioritized their previous careers without considering entrepreneurship as an option. Most female entrepreneurs in developed economies enter the business world later in life, between 40 and 60 years old, and their participation in the business industry predominates consumer-oriented activities and less activity in the industrial sector (Longoria, 2018). In addition, the retail sector still makes up the largest share of companies owned by women (Longoria, 2018). Female entrepreneurs in Europe tend to be more educated than their male counterparts, but they are also more likely to believe that they, as women, are less capable to run their own business compared to men in their economies (Longoria, 2018).

The increase in female entrepreneurs in developed countries may be correlated with women's access to the commercial capital, as women tend to finance their startups with different sources of financing, including personal savings, credit cards and commercial loans (Longoria, 2018). In developed countries, in addition to donations and bank loans available to female entrepreneurs, there are also diversity programs specialized in financing for business owners (Longoria, 2018). The levels of innovation are highest among female entrepreneurs in developed countries, including European nations, where female entrepreneurs are provided network connections to establish solid business contacts, pool resources and experience as a solution for gender strengthening (Longoria, 2018).

Cooney and Kidney (2008), through the Innovative Policy Research for Economic Growth (IPREG1) project, sought to address issues that were perceived as the most critical in Europe, empirically researching on growth policies in twelve countries including Ireland. Through the mapping of policies and its effectiveness in each country, a coverage index was developed based on interviews and research so that there could be debates about the production and formulation

of policies in different contexts in Europe. In conclusion, the research proves that Ireland was in a temporary economic situation. Political measures in the fields of innovation and entrepreneurship should be developed for growth, but at that moment, there was no policy or strategy aggregating entrepreneurship and innovation. Although there was a correlation between innovation and entrepreneurship implicitly for the government, there were no formalized strategic statements, making a new strategy necessary to develop an entrepreneurial climate and culture.

In accordance with the challenge presented in the statement by Richard Bruton, Minister of Employment, Enterprise and Innovation in September 2014, the challenge of this policy was to ensure that all entrepreneurs of all origins and ages were encouraged and supported to establish high-quality sustainable businesses with global potential for competitiveness (DBEI, 2020a). This would be the only basis for growth and job creation, but it simply did not have enough conditions and the country would have to collaborate with the Political Declaration in order to have a large number of entrepreneurs (DBEI, 2020a).

An integrated social structure must guarantee the insertion of female entrepreneurs in the economic environment, considering the cultural context existing between countries and institutions (Sanita, 2019; Kobeissi, 2010). With changes in female entrepreneurship at a global level, the importance of promoting the female gender has been instilled as a strategy for economic growth and poverty reduction (Morris *et al.*, 2020; Longoria, 2018; Kikcul *et al.*, 2012; Kobeissi, 2010). Secondly, the participation of women in the business environment depends on their presence in the formal economy encouraged by good governance. Developed countries have kept women in the formal economic environment, providing structures to female entrepreneurship through public policies.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) (2018) emphasizes the challenges of developing policies that embrace diversity, placing a spotlight on female entrepreneurs, especially since female entrepreneurial activity in Ireland has increased compared to previous years (GEM, 2018). In the context of Ireland's economic development, the Irish government needs to develop and invest in programs to encourage new businesses, in order to encourage innovation and leverage the economic potential in a dynamic way (Birdthistle, 2019).

The first policy statement on entrepreneurship in Ireland was published in 2014, making the participation of women and immigrants a priority in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, in addition to presenting Ireland as an attractive location for mobile startups internationally (DBEI, 2020a). In the 1990s, according to O'Gorman (2015), there was an investment in research to promote the creation of policies to support companies in dynamic regions of Europe, including the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) study in Ireland. Therefore, funding for research on entrepreneurship is less than in other European countries, and the focus is on management-level macroeconomics, when they could focus on policymakers and their effectiveness.

As a formal institution, Ireland's national entrepreneurship policy comes from the DBEI (DBEI, 2020b) - which, as described on the institution's website - "The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) plays a key role in implementing the Government's policies of stimulating the productive capacity of the economy and creating an environment which supports job creation and maintenance. The Department also has a remit to promote fair competition in the marketplace, protect consumers and safeguard workers".

The National Policy Declaration on Entrepreneurship initially sought to provide conditions for the sustainability of Irish businesses as local businesses (DBEI, 2020a). Exploring entrepreneurship in Ireland requires understanding whether there are public policies that enable entrepreneurship, especially in the female sphere, which requires the recognition of opportunities that do not come from the same conditions as those of men. The Policy Statement Entrepreneurship in Ireland, as a statement, details the actions deemed essential for implementation from 2015 onwards, to support entrepreneurship in Ireland.

The aforementioned document, Policy Statement Entrepreneurship in Ireland, details the actions to support entrepreneurship in Ireland, as well as the commitment of the Ministry of Employment, Enterprise and Innovation in constantly seeking new opportunities to strengthen the "entrepreneurial ecosystem", generating jobs in a sustainable manner (DBEI, 2020a, p. 5).

Substantially, the presentation was based on the three objectives below (DBEI, 2020a, p. 5):

"1. Building the pipeline - Increase the number of entrepreneurs who will be actively involved in creating high-quality startups and jobs across the country;

2. *Entrepreneurial capacity development - Develop entrepreneurial skills among the population and promote entrepreneurial thinking and talent;*

3. *Building the right conditions - Ensure the survival and growth of start-ups. "*

Female Entrepreneurs in Ireland mention that funding for startups is not accessible to all audiences and the financial ecosystem in Ireland is underdeveloped with the lack of venture capital, which is considered unequally in favour of male entrepreneurs (DBEI, 2018a). They comment that it is necessary to have more diversity within the market and that it is also necessary to solve difficulties and create an inclusive environment. Based on the same document, state agencies say a better approach may be to review existing programs (DBEI, 2018a). In contrast, this policy does not present training or investment for migrant entrepreneurs, and there is no concrete action in place (Birdthistle, 2019; Lofstrom, 2017; O'Gorman, 2015). There is a lack of research conducted that elucidates the need for migrant entrepreneurs in Ireland to formulate assertive programs.

Throughout this literature review, policies that promote financial resources cover one out of the 5M's (money), but women still need to meet other demands, even in developed countries, to undertake their own business. In the *Developed Countries List 2020* (2020), The Human Development Index (HDI) of Ireland is 0.942, which positions it as the third-most developed country in the world. Ireland has moved up quickly in the last five years and there has been an 8% decrease in income inequality over the past few years (World Population Review (2020)). The country's GDP per capita is around \$80,264 according to the World Population Review (2020). This information reinforces research by Morris *et al.* (2020) that explains the importance of developing financial access strategies for entrepreneurs in developed countries in order to eradicate poverty.

Based on the data above, money does not seem to be a reason that would prevent Ireland from promoting female entrepreneurship through public policies. However, when addressing maternity, there is evidence explained in O'Hagan's (2018) article that recognises motherhood as a category of intersectoral approach, based on women's narratives, and presents the existence of unequal regimes between motherhood and paid work. This factor keeps women in a position of subordination which influences their involvement with paid work. This also influences their

understanding of the existence of potential criticism when seeking professional development in line with the demands of gender in maternity (O'Hagan, 2018). Women have realized that when they become mothers, they need to prioritize motherhood to the detriment of their careers as a social role in Ireland, as they may feel the support does not exist (O'Hagan, 2018).

Despite legislation aimed at gender equality in Irish society, there has been no structural change to support working mothers, on account of the demand for exemplarity in their professional life. Extensive workload tends to hinder relationships between motherhood and paid work (O'Hagan, 2018). Although workplaces in Ireland have an increasing number of women and mothers working at all levels, women say they feel pressured, even though they see gender-neutrality in the workplace (O'Hagan, 2018). Women affirm that the workplace as a system produces adequate female workers, which points out that workplaces in Ireland have evolved slowly in the direction of gender equality, as opposed to the outdated structure that fostered patriarchal and traditional gender roles for women and mothers (O'Hagan, 2018). Therefore, although labour legislation promotes actions to reduce gender inequality, gender co-responsibility is a social aspect that requires stimulating institutions.

The correlation between gender theories and business motivations in an Irish context, through data generated by the national entrepreneurship survey conducted in 2003/2004 identified differences in the motivational factors of each gender to enter entrepreneurship, pointing out the relevance of gender issues (Anne and Eileen, 2010). Although there is a considerable gender effect on some motivational factors, gender equality in Ireland is not just about sex but there is a need to examine it in conjunction with other social factors such as marital status, parenting and / or age (Anne and Eileen, 2010).

The probability of women undertaking businesses has increased as they seek for a better balance between professional and family life, while men are more likely to undertake businesses for a higher income (Anne and Eileen, 2010). Thus, the Irish socio-cultural environment influences the motivation of women to seek a work-life balance in entrepreneurship, and there was no evidence of dissatisfaction with the job market (Anne and Eileen, 2010). Personal and commercial characteristics of the surveyed entrepreneurs do not differ from those of the workforce in Ireland. In addition to these characteristics, the number of female entrepreneurs decreases with age due to their social responsibilities for caring. This information is backed up as

married women and women with children participate less in the market. Regarding the care of children, fathers tend to delegate more to third parties than mothers (Anne and Eileen, 2010). Family involvement in Ireland still demands women more than men and remains one of the reasons why they participate less in the entrepreneurial market.

We must understand that gender equality demands knowledge of both motherhood and fatherhood (Anne and Eileen, 2010). The particularities between male and female entrepreneurship in Ireland are aligned to marital/family status, and also to caring responsibilities of children (Anne and Eileen, 2010). As a worldwide possibility of social inclusion and economic proficiency, even with the visible transformation of Irish society in the last three decades, there have been no strong advances in indicators of female entrepreneurship (Anne and Eileen, 2010). The author affirms that there are specific aspects of the sociocultural environment that can be strengthened in Ireland. As suggested in research by O'Hagan (2018), understanding the structure of gender relations can contribute to changes in inequalities.

The recent research "Generation Y women in Ireland: a vision of a new entrepreneurial phenomenon" developed by Nevins and Hamouda (2019) covers the specific obstacles of gender issues, and it is clear that men are twice as likely to become entrepreneurs than women. This research is aimed to comprehend the new generation of female entrepreneurs, named as Generation Y. Female entrepreneurs who tend to challenge themselves to make an impact have to focus on having a reasonable work-life balance and the information constructed from this research states that institutions and policymakers should rethink existing support models that may not be appropriate for this new entrepreneurial group based on the qualitative methodology (Nevins and Hamouda, 2019). After approximately 10 years according to research from Nevins and Hamouda (2019) and Anne and Eileen (2010), female entrepreneurs in Ireland still point out that women have more responsibilities for their families than men and seek a balance between professional and personal spheres. Therefore, how public policies aim to support the needs of female entrepreneurs in Ireland becomes a question to be answered.

Chapter 3. Research Question

As stated by several authors, entrepreneurship, especially in developed countries, has been a popular global subject of research (Kothari, 2017). These studies focus more on the male entrepreneurial environment, and it is not possible for female entrepreneurs to adapt the realities of the male entrepreneur (Kothari, 2017). This research aims to produce content specifically referring to the female entrepreneurial market in Ireland, as a social context and the entrepreneurial woman as a unit of analysis.

The theory of the 5Ms, a gender-aware framework for female entrepreneurship, proposed by Brush *et al.* (2009), explains how motherhood and the meso/macro-environment influence the attitudes of male and female entrepreneurs differently. This is the theoretical basis of this research; it aims to understand the Irish entrepreneurial market through the 5Ms that support female entrepreneurship. In relation to female entrepreneurs, public policies aim to integrate them into entrepreneurial activity by adapting to the needs of motherhood and the meso-macro environment. These policies are generally present in developed countries (Longoria, 2018).

Theoretical concepts of good governance are correlated to institutional theories on the economic results of developed countries, which improve their performance by stimulating the entrepreneurial market (North, 1990). Based on that, the question that guides this research aims to discuss how the government policies on entrepreneurship, such as the Irish National Political Declaration on entrepreneurship, have influenced the entrepreneurial market since 2015. As mentioned in the literature review it is evident that female entrepreneurship is correlated to the institutional theory and the governance of economic activity in developed countries.

An example of good governance in a developed country is the Irish National Policy Declaration on Entrepreneurship (2018) (DBEI, 2020a), a public policy that conceptually seeks to provide good conditions for the sustainability of the Irish economy. This includes supporting the launch of local companies by stimulating the presence of female entrepreneurs. Gender inequality in Irish entrepreneurship has remained in some ways over the past few years, even with a policy that aims to reduce it and provide adequate conditions for women to run businesses and collaborate with the country's economy. It is important to contemplate sociocultural differences in supportive policies for female entrepreneurs, because as Brush *et al.* (2009)

affirms, integrating female entrepreneurs into the local economy requires the promotion of support for women in both the ‘motherhood’ and the meso-macro environment.

Research Question:

How have women remained as entrepreneurs in the formal entrepreneurial market since the implementation of the Irish National Political Declaration (2015)?

This qualitative case study aims to identify the entrepreneurial context in Ireland through female entrepreneurs by answering the research questions below:

Research objective 1 - Based on the 5Ms, explore how the socio-cultural aspects in Ireland are and how women have remained in the formal entrepreneurial market during the Irish National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship.

- Who are the Female Entrepreneurs of Ireland? Narrative of the case of Female Entrepreneurs in Ireland

- How are the socio-cultural aspects of Ireland? Ireland’s female entrepreneurial Profile by opportunity or necessity, or both.

- How are the conditions faced by female entrepreneurs to remain in the formal entrepreneurial market during the Irish National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship? Exploring through the female entrepreneur’s experience - a gender-aware framework for women’s entrepreneurship in Ireland – 5Ms (Money, Market, Management, Motherhood and meso/macro-environment).

Research objective 2 - Understand if the Irish National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship has supported female entrepreneurs or not. As a good governance practice in Ireland, how has the Irish National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship supported female entrepreneurs? Explore the perception of female entrepreneurs, based on the three objectives from the Policy Statement Entrepreneurship in Ireland, seeing if they feel supported by them in practice or not.

The Irish National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship (2018) is a public policy, for the sustainability of the Irish economy, which fits into good governance practice and can be

understood as a strategy to provide gender equality in a developed country. Explore female entrepreneurship indicators since the implementation of the Irish National Political Declaration (2015 to 2019) to understand how women have remained entrepreneurs in the formal entrepreneurial market based on the 5Ms structure on female entrepreneurship needs.

Chapter 4. Methodology

The definition of methodology is linked to Research Design, Research Instrument, Research Sample, Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations. This chapter also addresses what happens in the female entrepreneurship research field in Ireland and the justifications for choosing the qualitative methodology through a case study.

4.1 Methodology Introduction

Understanding the difference between research method and research methodology is the first step in understanding how to conduct research, according to Adams, Raeside, and Khan (2014). The authors explain the research method as the way the research will be conducted and the research methodology as the science and philosophy approach that guides this conduct. Regarding the methodology, Gog (2015) states that in order to conduct a research, it is necessary to start by defining the philosophy (of the research), how the approach will be carried out, how the strategy will be implemented, as well as the choice for an approach that can be quantitative, qualitative or even mixed.

Although there is no exact procedure, the structure of a research process follows phases and, in most cases, includes the development of a question to clarify it, reviewing the existing literature, planning the research, conducting data collection and describing the findings (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Among the strategies for collecting qualitative data, such as the Narrative Inquiry, Historical Model, Grounded Theory, Ethnographic Model, phenomenological model, the case study model was selected because it allows the holistic analysis of the subject, female entrepreneurs in Ireland, considering the limit study time in this master's research, and the possibility to include pre-existing data from important sources to generate a relevant conclusion that provide a perspective perspective on the female entrepreneurial market in Ireland.

Based on the need for the appropriate methodology to find reliable answers, these research processes will be based on “The Research Onion”, developed by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), as shown below in figure 3. Following the objective of this study, this chapter

will present the qualitative case study methodology for gathering and analyzing data, including the justification for the choices that structured this study.

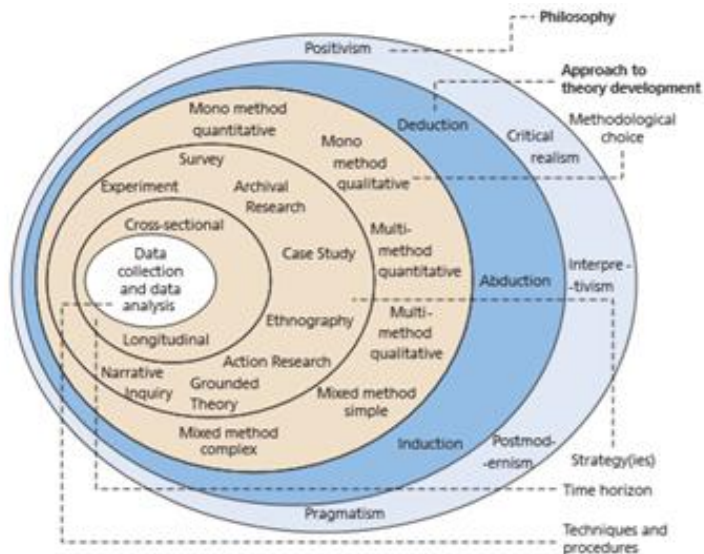


Figure 3: “The Research Onion” (Saunders *et al.*, 2019, p. 130).

4.2 Layer One: Philosophical Stances

According to Saunders *et al.*, (2019), this study will follow the process “The Research Onion”. Using this can help you apply the construction of new knowledge on a specific topic.

During the study process, sociocultural contexts and previous experiences can influence the interpretation of the project's findings and conclusions. Assuming that each researcher has a different philosophical interpretation or position in their view of the world, it is important to consider which philosophies fit to produce acceptable knowledge and understand their values so that they do not influence research paradigms (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Researchers are seeking to define a philosophical stance that permeates the entire structure of the research so that there is no influence on your personality during the research.

In the philosophical stance or research philosophy, there are three main types of hypotheses or assumptions: ontology, axiology and epistemology (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). To maintain a structure of concepts relevant to this study, the following topics will address the paradigm of ontology and epistemology.

4.2.1 Ontology

Ontology deals with the nature of reality, considering questions about researchers' assumptions of the world and their alignment with certain understandings. Understood by the ability to generate knowledge with a reliable source by many researchers, the aspects addressed by ontology are known as "objectivism" and "subjectivism" (Saunders *et al.*, 2009 p. 110). Objectivism is a view of the existing general structure assumed by social entities in the external reality. Subjectivism is the social phenomena from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors concerned with its existence (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

4.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology comprises the knowledge acceptable in a field of study (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). This study is based on the epistemological nature in which the term epistemology is described by "what is" or "must be" determined as acceptable knowledge in relation to a discipline or field of study, and how it is communicated to others. Understanding that epistemology aims at building knowledge in an acceptable way, this research will be obtained through the interpretivism of individual qualitative interviews, in order to understand how female entrepreneurship develops in Ireland through The Irish National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship.

4.2.3 Interpretivism

Following the structure of the research philosophy, the theoretical perspective of interpretivism allows researchers to understand the social roles played by an individual as a social actor. As an individual, the researcher interprets the role of others based on their own references (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Interpretivism understands the researcher's need to differentiate people from their role as social actors. The term "social actors" is meaningful, as it can interpret daily social roles and that of other people according to our particularities, our "set of meanings" (Saunders *et al.*, 2009 p.116). The author states that empathy as a researcher's stance allows one to understand the social world of the research subjects according to their point of view, which is also seen as a challenge.

In this approach, human actions are the result of their own meanings and not of external forces. Interpretivism means interpretation based on subjectivity, not only based on scientific articles, but also on the recognition of differences between people and their social interactions. Based on detailed semi-structured interviews, from a small sample of participants (female entrepreneurs), this research aims to understand the sociocultural aspects that have supported female entrepreneurship in Ireland since the beginning of the Irish National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship. As suggested by Saunders *et al.* (2009), interpretivism is highly recommended for social studies or behavior, in order to offer a meaningful understanding of the complex interaction between individuals and the social environment.

4.3 Layer two: Inductive research approach

Saunders *et al.* (2009) state that research approaches can be deductive or inductive. The inductive method requires observation of facts through inductive reasoning, that is, through the experimentation of what can be observed. As a research approach, inductive theory passes from “observation of empirical reality” (Collis and Hussey, 2003, p. 15), adding knowledge through data collection.

Based on the literature review on female entrepreneurship and its relationship with institutions, good governance and the formal business market in developed countries, it is possible to identify the importance of understanding the sociocultural aspects for the improvement of general female entrepreneurship indicators. Exploring data on female entrepreneurship in Ireland during the policy of the Irish National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship has a clearly defined objective of understanding the sociocultural characteristics of female entrepreneurship in Ireland. Exploring the 5Ms by qualitative research helps us understand more about the lives of female entrepreneurs in Ireland. Saunders *et al.* (2009) states that although there are different ways to analyze qualitative data using inductive or deductive approaches, three types of processes - summarizing, categorizing and structuring using narrative are the appropriate ways to analyze the data. The authors also consider the use of analytical resources, such as abstracts, own memos and a researcher's diary. This method makes it possible to understand the analytical data, interact with the different transcripts/notes,

recognize key themes from them for further exploration, and make up theories based on these apparent patterns or relationships that can be tested, to finally draw conclusions.

4.3.1 Research Strategies: Qualitative research approach

In the qualitative approach, the aim is to inductively generate theories, and as it is based on non-numerical data, it is supported by words of the individual's interpretation and its correlation to its social context. In the quantitative approach, substantiating through numerical data and quantifying answers to generate information are the goals. According to Adams *et al.* (2014, p. 6) "*Qualitative research is used in almost every sphere of life, such as in clinical, biological, epidemiological, sociological and business research*".

Adams *et al.* (2014, p. 26) understands the existence of the "Research Cycle" that represents stages such as "*Formulating, generating hypotheses, collecting data, analyzing and modelling, assessing reliability and validity and lastly, selling the solution*". The authors summarize the steps in the model below to show the method of conducting this research:

"*Specify the real problem*" (Adams *et al.*, 2014, p. 29) points out the need to understand the research proposal and the tested hypotheses. Gog (2015) states that defining the question is the first step to conducting research. Exploring indicators based on sociocultural environments and female entrepreneurship since the implementation of The Irish National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship can help you understand why female entrepreneurs remain in the formal entrepreneurial market, and what challenges they face.

Establishing a model based on theory, by dividing the problem into parts is the second action, according to Adams *et al.* (2014). This research aims to explore the sociocultural aspects of female entrepreneurship in Ireland since the implementation of The Irish National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship.

This research uses the case study using appropriate techniques. Formalization of the developed model is the third action, according to Adams *et al.* (2014). The case study as a research method requires three aspects mentioned by Gog (2015) - the nature of the researched question, the researcher's control on the current behavioral phenomena of the sample and the focus on the contemporary. In this research, the information comes from female entrepreneurs.

The case study comprises characteristics of the studied phenomenon (Harwati, 2019). The study comprises different situations, defines several information resources and tends to direct the collection and analysis of data through theoretical propositions.

4.3.2 In-depth interviews structure

This research selects the qualitative method, case study and semi structured interviews. This study was conducted by a qualitative approach, using detailed and individual interviews. The researcher decided to follow the philosophy to obtain reliable information about the sociocultural aspects that influence female entrepreneurs to remain in the entrepreneurial Irish market. In addition, this structure was chosen according to Saunders *et al.* (2019) which comprises the important research interviews to gather valid and reliable data for the proposed study.

This research is organized in two stages: 1. Literary review about female entrepreneurship indicators in Ireland and 2. Interviews with female entrepreneurs to see what they think of the female entrepreneurial market.

Part 1.A: Explore the indicators of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) in Ireland, during the mentioned period. Aiming to understand if there was an increase in the birth rate of female companies and if there was a decrease in the mortality rate of female companies. These are reliable sources of information and are available and recognized by the GEM (GEM Ireland, 2020).

Part 1.B: Exploring the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) database on sociocultural aspects of female entrepreneurs during the period of the Irish National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship (2018). OECD presents generic data on gender entrepreneurship such as profile, age, education and sector of activity, giving a general understanding of female entrepreneurs in Ireland. OECD data explores information regarding motherhood and the meso-macro environment touching base on the 2Ms crucial for women to undertake businesses, as found in the literature review.

The first part of the research explores female entrepreneurship indicators since the implementation of the Irish National Political Declaration. In this way, it verifies whether the proportion of female entrepreneurs is growing and maintaining.

Part 2: Interviews with female entrepreneurs

Exploring interviews can be very beneficial when examining a case study (Gog, 2015). Redundant questions provide an opportunity for articulation (Snyder, 2012). The second part of the research aims to listen to 10 female entrepreneurs active during the period of Ireland's National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship.

A set of semi-structured "survey questions" (Saunders *et al.*, 2019) were developed to be used during the interviews with their order decided based on the appearance of the participants' thoughts. At the beginning of the interviews, conditional questions were asked to the participants to guarantee the validity of the participation according to the study criteria. All ten participants met the study criteria.

To clarify the study topic, the researcher explained the concept of the Irish entrepreneurial market, female entrepreneurs and sociocultural aspects related to the entrepreneurial market, concepts of motherhood and meso-macro involvement, as a briefing before the commencement of the interview. This ensured that the participants were aware of the topic, and provided an appropriate environment.

4.3.3 Sample

"By defining the sampling frame, you are defining the population about which you want to generalize" (Saunders *et al.*, 2009, p. 217). In relation to this, 10 female entrepreneurs active in the Irish entrepreneurial market since 2015, while the Ireland's National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship was in force, are the sample of this research.

Gog (2015) mentions that one case is sufficient to generate valid data, but it is important to correlate more than one case, when possible, to further prove its validity. Supported by this affirmation, this research aims to bring more than one interview and broaden the knowledge about the Irish female entrepreneurship subject.

4.3.4 Case Study

Gog (2015) informs that the case study as a method becomes even more relevant because it obtains multiple realistic perspectives enhancing the descriptiveness. Gog (2015) emphasizes the importance of having a strategy for analyzing the information in the case study. General analytical techniques can be used, for example based on existing theories, exploring an existing data case from the bottom up, describing a case and discussing opposite justifications (Gog, 2015).

4.4 Layer Four: Research Method

Saunders *et al.*, (2009), described in the “Onion Research” model, two types of methods to collect data: the mono method and the multiple method. The mono method is defined by the collection of a single data source, in this case, a single quantitative data collection technique. The multiple method, it is based on more than one data source.

Understanding the complexity of the multiple method, although it allows to explore in a holistic way the expansion of the possibilities of data collection and analysis, the mono method is suitable for this case, because the time and resource factors are limited in relation to the chosen topic. Thus, this study is based on a mono method of qualitative research and data collection through in-depth interviews, after reviewing the existing literature on the information on female entrepreneurship indicators in Ireland.

4.5 Layer five: Time horizons

Cross-sections comprises the study of a specific phenomenon at a given time. The limited time of the study and interviews are recognized (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). In this research we understand the Cross-sectional nature by the time limit and by studying the phenomenon of female entrepreneurship in Irish society.

4.6 Layer six: Data collection and analysis

The final layer of "The Research Onion", proposed by Saunders *et al.* (2009), shows the interrelated and interactive action of qualitative data collection and analysis. Adams *et al.* (2014, p. 26) alludes to the existence of the "Research Cycle" that represents stages that need to be followed such as *"formulating, generating hypotheses, collecting data, analyzing and modelling, assessing reliability and validity, and of course, selling the solution"*.

4.6.1 Data collection

Investigating the qualitative nature of this project, the selected data source was chosen as the in-depth interview tool. Semi-structured and open-ended questions related to the project's topics were designed so that the opinions of the participating entrepreneurs could be well-comprehended and relevant data could be generated. Qualitative researchers use different categories of coding such as context, situation, perspectives, activities, strategies etc.

The interviews are to be conducted in 2 different sessions. The interviewees who met the requirements to become entrepreneurs in Ireland since 2015 were chosen at random in the city of Dublin for two weeks between the second half of June and the first week of July 2020. The topic was introduced and the Skype interview (visual recording resource) was scheduled. The permissions for recording data and videoing participants were obtained at the beginning of the interview. During the recordings, impressions and notes related to the interview were documented for the next step which included analysis of the data collected and the report of findings and conclusions. Before conducting the interview with the target audience, the questions were tested with students in an online environment to ensure that the objective of the study could be properly achieved.

4.6.2 Data analysis

Acknowledging that the qualitative data collected is not numerical in nature, it was important to search for the appropriate strategy to organize the volume of information generated. Thus, in the process of analyzing the collected data, interviews with participants were recorded

by voice and video, later being transcribed into Word files and saved individually to reach the premise of having several pieces of evidence, generating the case study database and maintaining this evidence (Kohlbacher, 2006).

Based on a script referring to data analysis in a case study, Kohlbacher (2006) reaffirms that this action consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing or otherwise seeking to associate the findings to address the initial propositions of a study. Data analysis proposes analytical strategies that can be based on theoretical propositions, thinking about rival explanations or developing a case description (Gog, 2015; Kohlbacher, 2006). In this case it is proposed that the sociocultural aspects are related to the development of entrepreneurship in Ireland, influencing the permanence of women in the formal entrepreneurial market.

Kohlbacher (2006, p. 7) affirms that these analytical strategies can be used in practice through five specific techniques: "*pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis*". This research established patterns based on the information obtained through the interviews carried out and the logic models on the information available about female entrepreneurship indicators in Ireland from 2015 to 2019.

After transcribing, encoding and correlating the information in a table, it is possible to validate the information based on the literature review to see if new information generated is relevant (Kohlbacher, 2006). This was initially done through the coding table and later on the qualitative results analysis table as appendix 1.

Four steps were proposed to complete the analysis of the data of this research, which will be discussed now:

The first step was the codification of responses by question, based on the construction of the questions to verify the sociocultural aspects found in the literature review. The second step involved understanding the codes in relational strategies, organizing them in hierarchy, typology and network to understand their connection or correlation within the context presented in the literature review.

The third stage was analyzing the data from the case study in a classification table, and cross tabulating to generate reports. Complementing the qualitative analysis with other sources

of information to perform the triangulation increases confidence in the validity of the study's conclusions.

Finally, it was necessary to generate the final propositions by linking the codes to the initial propositions to identify the new propositions associated with the case study data. Therefore, reducing data, identifying categories and connections, developing themes and offering well-founded conclusions were the purpose of this research. In this way, the analysis of the data extracted from the interviews with female entrepreneurs and the existing documents aims to sustain the quality of the information, while referring to the entrepreneurial context of Ireland.

4.6.3 Ethical Considerations

Based on the qualitative approach, this research is carried out through in-depth research interviews lasting an average of one hour. The objective of the in-depth interview was to generate relevant information through semi-structured interviews, where there is a 'script' of questions and the answers can be detailed in depth by other questions (Adams *et al.*, 2014). Thus, the entrepreneurs were contacted by email and text messages, inviting them to the online video interview by Zoom and Skype applications. During the video interview the authorization request for recording was recorded for the nature of academic research. The personal information of the participants are not disclosed in the survey in compliance with confidentiality regulations.

Based on the challenges that researchers may face in order to gain access to people or organizations, it is important to consider ethical issues in research planning. It is observed by Saunders *et al.* (2009), that research that may distress any participants should be reconsidered. Participants also have the right to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, with the right to withdraw at any time. These resources are also in line with the regulations of the GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation in Europe, where the researcher must have the consent of the participants to collect and store personal data.

4.6.4 Limitations

A longitudinal study based on the same topic would be of great value, providing much better insights about the study. This study is limited due to the research design - a cross-sectional research, characterized by a limited period and a mono qualitative method of research.

Chapter 5. Findings: The case of female entrepreneurs in Ireland

This case study on female entrepreneurship in Ireland was conducted via interviews with 10 female entrepreneurs. Documented analysis generated by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCDE) are studied to help explore the characteristics of the female entrepreneurial market in Ireland since 2015 when the first Irish National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship was implanted.

Through the qualitative data analysis the exploration of sociocultural aspects and challenges faced by female entrepreneurs to remain in the formal entrepreneurial market was carried out by the 5Ms categories, covering markets, money, management, maternity and meso-macro environments. The 5Ms and other research objectives will be described in the findings after presenting the profile of these entrepreneurs in the narrative below.

5.1 Narrative of the case of Female Entrepreneurs in Ireland

5.1.1 Unity of Analysis: Women Entrepreneur in Ireland

Case of study context: The Irish scenario of a developed economy was found, where female Case of study context: The Irish scenario of a developed economy was found, where female entrepreneurs in Ireland who are between 26 and 49 years old, mostly started their entrepreneurial activities by opportunity, since they had other professional activities. They began their entrepreneurial career to achieve autonomy and flexibility. All respondents have a college degree, although they do not always choose to perform their professional activities. These women did not understand entrepreneurship as a priority option and they were never given information on identifying government initiatives to support them. These women started their activities and stay active through their personal resources, postponing maternity and family plans until they feel financially stable. These women do not understand gender co-responsibility as a social characteristic and do not recognize family or social support to find the balance between their personal and professional lives.

To support this case study about female entrepreneurship, 10 women with active registered enterprises were interviewed. The entrepreneurial years of the participants span between 2012 to 2020, with 9 of the interviewees residing in Dublin and 1 in Limerick. Only 1 started professional activity in collaboration with another female entrepreneur, and all the others started their activities without a business partner. The age profile between these women range from 26 to 49 years old, as of June 2020 when they were interviewed.

The marital status ranged from married, single and divorced. The interviewees are of multiple nationalities, which helps the interviewer get an idea of the multicultural society in Ireland. In Dublin, 6 Brazilian women, 2 Irish women, 1 Romanian woman and 1 French woman were interviewed, and all immigrant entrepreneurs have lived in Ireland for at least 3 years. Out of the Brazilian women, 3 had European (Italian) citizenship and the remaining 3 are married to European citizens which enables them to receive a Stamp 4 visa.

The GEM (2018) survey points out that three out of four new entrepreneurs have international client partnerships. Of the 10 interviewees, 5 have services and products available on the market for international assistance and the other interviewees serve local and immigrant clients, although they are not directly in contact with international clients. The rate of female entrepreneurs who closed businesses down was (1.6%), lower than the rate of males (2.2%) (GEM, 2018). None of the female entrepreneurs interviewed in this research reported closing activities in enterprises previously. Only 1 of the interviewees has a business that is still active in another country (Brazil), and it is in line with its Irish business as the company operates in the same field. All other entrepreneurs interviewed were first registered as entrepreneurs in Ireland, and as informed above, are currently working within their companies.

In assessing the national context, GEM (2018) puts Ireland in seventh position in Europe in the GEM National Entrepreneurship Context Index (NECI). Availability of initial financing, venture capital and government programs for entrepreneurs are factors that contribute to this ranking. One of the interviewees had her entrepreneurial trajectory influenced by the guidance provided by a government benefit granted by Enterprise Ireland to the unemployed, receiving government assistance in the first year of her entrepreneurial activities. Nine women interviewed in this survey did not have access to government offers, and claim to have used their own

resources to start their businesses. Two interviewees currently have a financial plan or application in progress to expand their businesses.

Through their interaction with the market, management, money, motherhood and the meso-macro environment in Ireland, the common information is that all the interviewees started their activities by understanding an entrepreneurial opportunity, either because of their experience or knowledge about the industry. They had experience, certification and affinity with the areas in which they operate their businesses. All of them were satisfied with the craft of entrepreneurship, pointing out that it was a choice and for the most part, they already had entrepreneurship as a professional objective.

The industries tackled by the entrepreneurs are Healthcare, Beauty, Fashion Retail, Graphic Design, Training, Human Resources and Publicity Advertising. The Brazilian entrepreneurs in the Beauty department have never had any experience of gender bias, but claim the need for constant technical updates. The Brazilian entrepreneurs also pointed out that there is a lot of competition and for them, it was not so easy to attract local customers, as confirmed by the Irish entrepreneurs. The interviewees from the Training, Graphic Design and Fashion Retail segments understand that these industries are still male-dominated and female representation is important. The interviewee from the Publicity Advertising area also points out that her biggest challenge is to search for clients because she is an immigrant in an unknown market environment.

The interviewees' decision-making does not correlate with family influence. They point out that emotional support is important to boost morale, but only one of the interviewees affirms that she financially depends on her spouse during the two years of her company in operation. All of the interviewees understand that it is challenging to unite their personal and professional lives as entrepreneurs, and one of the interviewees said she has experienced spousal issues, although most of them affirm that the workload is not unfavourable, because they self-govern their working hours. These entrepreneurs understand that work overload is part of the business management lifestyle. Only one of the interviewees is a mother (of two children) and says that entrepreneurship allows her to adjust her workload to maternal responsibilities, as she is a single mother. The other entrepreneurs do not have children and understand that prioritizing their

ventures does not allow them to plan pregnancies during this time, as they may not be suited to the additional responsibility.

One of the interviewees took part in government programs to set up the company and had rejected financial requests from the government, using her own resources to expand the business. The others sought support from accountants or friends to open their companies.

They understand that there is a lack of information on existing policies, as they have not been addressed or had access to the options available. Part of the interviewees affirm that they would like to have been part of programs to support entrepreneurship, as they recognize that their activities are complex and often require knowledge and experience that they do not have. They also state that understanding financial credit, technical training and guidance on legislation would be useful government support. All said that support policies for entrepreneurship are important, although some of them fail to believe that the existing policy in Ireland supports them in some way. Although they see Ireland as a promising market for female entrepreneurship and would like to expand their ventures, leveraging their service demands is found difficult in some cases mainly due to lack of financial support.

Chapter 6. Research findings and discussion

6.1. Research Objective 1 – Ireland’s female entrepreneurial context based on 5Ms

1. Based on the 5Ms, explore how the sociocultural aspects in Ireland are and how women have remained in the formal entrepreneurial market during the Irish National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship.

Interview themes emerged: Opportunity, Preconception, Personal Savings, Familiar Support, Lack of life balance, Motherhood, Challenge, Clients and Competition.

6.1.1 Ireland’s female entrepreneurial Profile

Entrepreneurs can have different motivations to start them off in business based on opportunities perceived in the market (Ali *et al.*, 2020). Understanding the types of entrepreneurial activity requires identifying if it is an opportunity or necessity. The country's entrepreneurial profile can be perceived through the type of entrepreneurship, and although other job options exist alongside entrepreneurial opportunities, there still exists the choice of undertaking a business with profitability (Fredström *et al.*, 2020). Irish entrepreneurship represents itself as Opportunistic. All the entrepreneurs interviewed have their businesses registered legally and although they had other opportunities, they saw potential profitability in entrepreneurship in the departments they chose.

"I wanted to become an entrepreneur to have my own business, yeah. My only regret is I wish I left my job sooner." **15, 26 years old, Irish, Registered since 2018, fashion and retailer.**

The performance of a company depends not only on the industries to which they belong or on their individual characteristics, but also on the location of their countries of origin, which have different institutional, cultural, political and economic environments (Huggins and Izushi, 2015). The Irish entrepreneurial market made it possible for some of the interviewees to start businesses in areas where they had little experience in the country of origin. They could work with autonomy and freedom, even in a market that until then was unknown to them.

"I started a new career here and that is not my profession in Brazil (...) I saw the opportunity to be able to open my own space and also be able to give other people the

opportunity to work in the area, right? So that was the question. And I also always wanted to feel like I own myself, not having to depend on anyone. " I2, 31 years old, Brazilian, Registered since 2020, Beauty.

As I10 (34 years old, Brazilian, Registered since 2016, Human Resources) mentions, if it were not for the government support offered by Enterprise Ireland, the courage to invest in a company would not have arose, confirming that the entrepreneurial market opportunities are also available for immigrants who are authorized to work in Ireland.

6.1.2 A gender-aware framework for women's entrepreneurship in Ireland - 5Ms

Particularities determine the difference in how women access the standard 3Ms, markets, money and administration, which are complemented by the highlight of the maternity metaphor. The difference in the environment of these women can also influence behaviours (Brush *et al.*, 2009). This was evident in an interview with 9 female entrepreneurs in Ireland with active businesses. Although this research has benefited a diverse group of women from 4 different nations, according to the interviewees, there is a balance between personal and professional demands. This allows them to proceed with businesses successfully, giving a better chance of potential growth. However, they all recognize that without understanding the 5 Ms structure in their concepts it would not be possible to carry out their activities as entrepreneurs.

6.1.2.1 Money and Management

Brush *et al.* (2009) points out that Money is crucial, as it provides access to financial capital conditions. The Human Development Index (HDI) in Ireland is 0.942 and the country's GDP per capita is around \$80,264. Research by Morris *et al.* (2020) elucidates the importance of developing financial access strategies for entrepreneurs in developed countries in order to eradicate poverty.

One of the interviewees used public or private resources, the others informed that they used personal savings to start their activities, and some of them remained in previous jobs throughout the initial years of their businesses. Some did not register their companies until achieving a budget. Most of them mentioned that they are unaware of actions to support entrepreneurs in Ireland or did not seek support as a lack of interest / confidence in actually getting any support.

"I ended up not asking for financial credit, right? I, what I did was, I started working at home, right? I left the job I had started working at home. I started saving money." **I2, 31 years old, Brazilian, Registered since 2020, Beauty.**

"Initially at the start anything I made in my full-time job I was putting into my business. And anything I made in my business I just put back into my business. So, I haven't got funding." **I5, 26 years old, Irish, Registered since 2018, Fashion and Retail.**

The female entrepreneurs interviewed prefer to wait for the financial guarantee to invest in the registration of their companies and have the cash to maintain themselves for a period, rather than to seek a bank loan. **I10 (34 years old, Brazilian, registered since 2016, Human Resources)** reported that she applied at least twice for government initiatives and once for private initiatives. After credit rejection, she invested on her own to expand her business. Only one female entrepreneur in this research showed financial dependence on her partner for personal expenses, while waiting for the financial stabilization of her company.

6.1.2.2 Market

The Market can be an indecisive area, especially for starting a business. The interviewees recognize the opportunities in the industries in which they operate and point out that seeking customers has been one of their main challenges. None of the women interviewed had any problems regarding the positioning of the Irish entrepreneurial market, as all of them already had some professional experience in the segment in which they registered their companies. Although it is clear that prejudice still exists in specific industries, the positivity and joy the interviewees had towards the Irish entrepreneurial market was unanimous.

“There is sort of a problem, that there isn't enough visibility for female artists in Ireland, it's something that is just starting and just picking up” **I6, 28 years old, French, Registered since 2015, Graphic Design.**

Irish entrepreneurs feel supported and recognized by Irish customers for their business. This kind of situation was not mentioned by any immigrant entrepreneur. They mostly specify that their biggest challenges as managers of their own businesses are to attract customers and make themselves known, informing that initially they started approaching customers from their home countries, letting word-of-mouth reach local customers. The challenge of attracting local customers may be common for entrepreneurial immigrants.

“The biggest one is finding the clients, because you have to know people. So as a foreigner, you know it's harder to do that. But when you live here you're one of them, so yeah, I think this is the biggest challenge, to find the clients.” **I9, 30 years old, Romanian, Registered since 2018, Publicity Advertising.**

6.1.2.3 Maternity

Maternity as a metaphor for family context are more socially associated with women rather than men (Brush *et al.*, 2009), and as explained by Jennings and McDougald (2007), not necessarily because all women are mothers, but because of the family's expectations of women. Based on these premises, from 10 interviewees, only 1 has children and points out that working as an entrepreneur makes it possible to balance personal and professional life. The tendency of financial independence among these entrepreneurs in relation to the family is clearly identified in this research. Most interviewees pointed out that emotional support from family is important.

A common characteristic of 9 interviewed entrepreneurs is their dedication to developing their businesses, where in their majority they affirmed preferring to focus on their businesses and seek their stability instead of having children and being a mother. These businesswomen understand that being in contact with motherhood or the family will influence the development of the entrepreneurial lifestyle.

The 9 interviewees who do not have children point out that business is their priority and understand that motherhood will require a division of activities that can overwhelm them. Regarding the balance between personal and professional life, female entrepreneurs, in their totality, affirm the influence of professional responsibilities to their personal lives and often about the overload of hours and activities. The only interviewee with children affirms the possibility of reconciling maternal and professional activities while developing a company. The 2016 census reports that the number of children per family in Ireland was 1.38 in 2016, down from 1.41 when compared to 2011 (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2019).

“I think we are multitaskers as women, we just do it all. So, yeah, I've learned to do everything. Look after my kids, look after my business, and just be very efficient.” **I8, 47 years old, Irish, Registered since 2012, Beauty.**

“Everything has to be very well planned, because I don't have a very certain schedule”
I3, 37 years old, Brazilian, Registered since 2015, Beauty.

6.1.2.4 Meso-macro environment

Various contexts outside the family context, including regional conditions (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020) or country-specific factors (Welsh *et al.*, 2016; Pathak *et al.*, 2013) are important to understand the level of women's suitability as a formal entrepreneur. Based on these premises, we understand that not all factors are directly governed by the characteristics of the meso and macro environment in Ireland.

Entrepreneurial immigrants recognize different barriers to enter the market and start their businesses, such as the need for visas to regularize their activities. Consequently, their perception of the Market and how you manage your business tends to be different. Entrepreneurs mention some segments such as fashion retail and graphic design are still very masculine, with little female presence in chief cargo. This masculinity may represent Ireland's entrepreneurial market in both of these departments.

Some interviewees mention female competition in the entrepreneurial market, this could work in favour of the aspiring entrepreneur, if the idea of female partnership arose. There were quotes about prejudices regarding the services offered, and also about age and gender bias in relation to the market. This shows that women in Ireland face disadvantages and particularities regarding the professional segments.

"when we rented a space for us, the current landlord made a point of getting to know us and she admitted that she had a prejudice when she said she knew what we were doing in relation to massage (...) She properly admitted it and I believe this is because I am female and young. I am too young to hear something like that. I believe that it prejudice towards women, towards young people and towards immigrants. " **11, 28 years old, Brazilian, Registered since 2018, Health and care.**

6.2 Research Objective 2

2. As a good governance practice in Ireland, how has the Irish National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship supported female entrepreneurs?

Interview themes emerged: Own initiative; Accounting support, Financial support, Governmental programs, Business set up, Entrepreneurial policy, Lack of communication, Training support, Education.

Social patterns influence self-perception and this is evident in how women perceive themselves in the entrepreneurial world (Brush *et al.*, 2009). The perception of market opportunity is related to multiple aspects and can even be structured through the encouragement of third parties as support stimuli in various ways through a multiplicity of social coordination (Fletcher, 2006).

The need of *“facilitating entrepreneurship among women, youth and migrants, scaling up micro-enterprises and generating more medium-sized firms, and increasing SME activity on foreign markets”* (OECD, 2019, p. 15) is an ongoing status. There is also confirmation in the report that *“there appears to be a gap in support for entrepreneurship among migrants. This group has a number of distinct needs in entrepreneurship and an overall client group size that is large enough to merit dedicated support”* (OECD, 2019, p. 40). This point is confirmed by interviews with immigrant female entrepreneurs (non-Irish) who tend to feel secluded from government actions.

“I think a lot is already changing. I think they have been looking at immigrants, right in another way.” **I3, 37 years old, Brazilian, Registered since 2015, Beauty.**

The Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland (DBEI, 2020a), as a statement presents three objectives that will be explored with the findings anon. These objectives aim to meet the needs of entrepreneurs in general, and are unknown by the 10 entrepreneurs interviewed in this survey. Although the interviewed do not feel assisted or supported by the Irish government entrepreneurially, all of them claim there is a favorable environment for female entrepreneurship in Ireland and that public policies are important to guarantee their participation in the society in an egalitarian way.

Throughout the study of the views of these female entrepreneurs and how they have perceived themselves in this context, it is understood that they aspire to be identified by this policy along the line as the Policy Statement Entrepreneurship in Ireland aims to develop and assist them as professionals. The entrepreneurs want to have easy access channels to understand how the government can enhance their enterprises and provide adequate conditions for them to undertake their ventures, because they are busy enough managing all the aspects of their business and personal lives.

The entrepreneurs understand that they could boost their ventures by receiving advice or guidance from the government, and many of them report that they would like to have financial and training support, but they do not even know how to request this type of help. Nine of them started their activities with their own investment capital, remaining informal due to a lack of resources. Many of them claimed they could potentially contribute more to the country's economy as an entrepreneur if they had some form of guidance, because they spent plenty of time and effort looking for alternatives and working informally, until the right time to register arose. Four of the women interviewed identify that if they had received support, they may have already invested in the expansion of their businesses, as they identify potential in the market for this investment.

6.2.1 First objective of Policy Statement Entrepreneurship in Ireland - Increase the number of entrepreneurs.

In terms of the first objective of the Policy Statement Entrepreneurship in Ireland, which states being involved in creating high quality startups and jobs across the country, there was a good understanding of how these female entrepreneurs started their activities in a diverse environment. Nine female entrepreneurs from different industries offer different products, services and technologies. Seven of these women sought support from friends and already have their ventures and accountants to formalize their business, and in some cases, regularize their activities.

"I could set up my venture seeking information for myself with the support of people close to me, and also with legal support in relation to the accountant" **I1, 28 years old, Brazilian, Registered since 2018, Health and care**

In the case of entrepreneurs who have online business or do not need a physical space to start their activities, the activity of opening the company took place easily. 1 of the interviewees mentioned being encouraged by the government to register her company. This emphasizes the first policy objective on the proposal to increase employability in Ireland.

In the Action Plan for Jobs 2016 to 2018, Enterprise Ireland approved the of funding of a total of 105 start-ups considered by the department as High Potential and invested in a further 112 new early-stage businesses in companies led by female entrepreneurs, as figure 4 below (DBEI, 2018b).

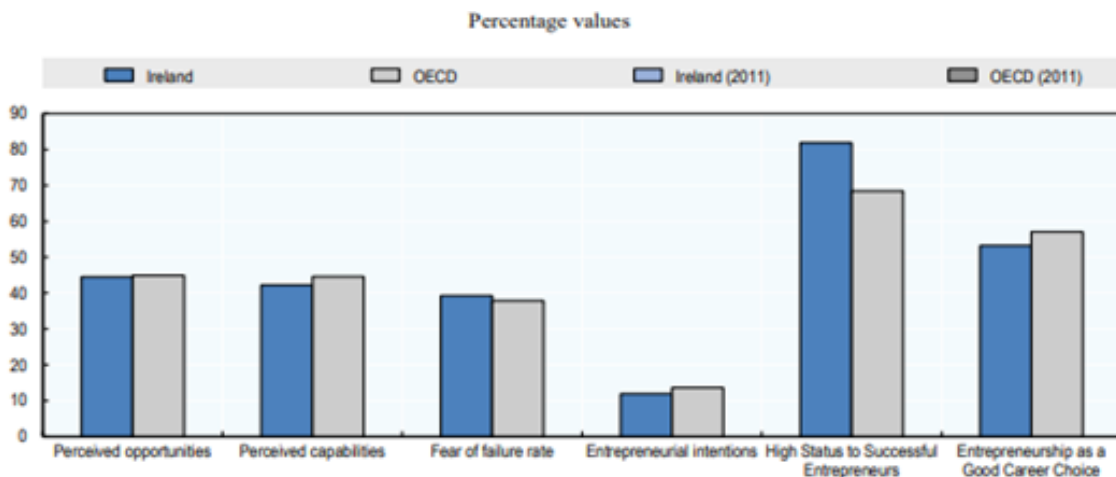


Figure 4 – Entrepreneurial attitudes in Ireland, 2017 (OECD, 2019, p. 25).

Although entrepreneurial attitudes are considered positive, the share of the entrepreneurial population considered successful is above the OECD average, as 42% of people who perceive opportunities for entrepreneurship believe they have skills and knowledge needed to start up a business in Ireland. The OECD survey shows that the self-employment rate for women and young people was below average in 2016 and this is also evident in the Total activity rates, as can be observed in the early stages (TEA) in the image below (OECD, 2019). This report explains gender self-perception and the crucial skills needed to start and expand a business, where 53% versus 35% of women feel more prepared for this initiative (OECD, 2019), as can be checked in figures 5 and 6 above.

Figure 1.8. Early stage entrepreneurial activity among target groups

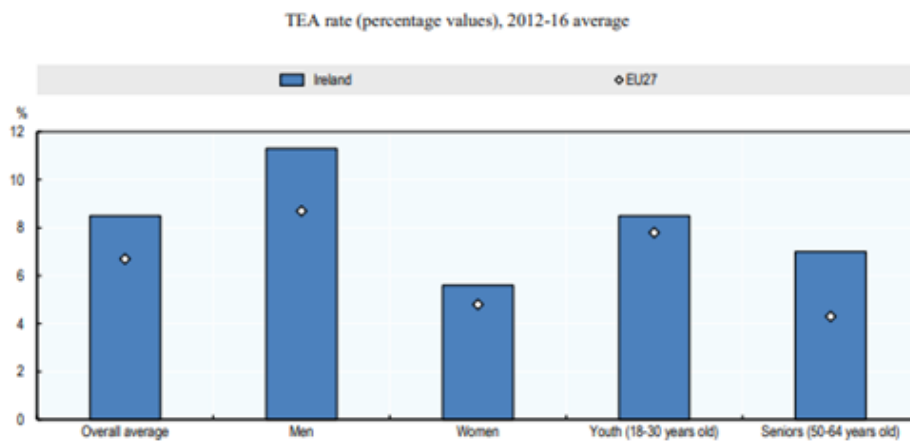


Figure 5 – Early stage Entrepreneurial activity among target groups (OECD, 2019, p. 26).

As a percentage of adult population

		Men	Women	Ratio of rates
Participation in labour force	Age 20-64	84% (1 131 000)	69% (947 000)	1.2 : 1
	Working fulltime (Age 15+)	74% (899 000)	52% (520 000)	1.7 : 1
Rates of entrepreneurship	New business owners (started in past 3.5 years)	4.6%	2.6%	1.8 : 1
	Total Early Stage Entrepreneurship Index	12.7%	7.0%	1.8 : 1

Figure 6 – Rates of labor force participation and entrepreneurship in Ireland, 2017 (OECD, 2019, p. 81).

Men were three times more likely to be self-employed than women (21.2% vs 6.9% for women), considering a larger gap than other EU member states. The gender gap in

entrepreneurship is higher than in labour forces in Ireland, as shown above. Women and senior entrepreneurs are more likely to operate innovative companies and all social target groups are more likely to create a more significant number of jobs in the next five years than the EU average, according to the report developed by the OECD.

6.2.2 Second objective of Policy Statement Entrepreneurship in Ireland - *Entrepreneurial capacity development*

Regarding the development of entrepreneurial skills in the population so that there is an appreciation of thought and entrepreneurial talent, 3 of the 10 interviewees stated that they expected to receive tools, guidance or training under the policy. Although they have considered searching for information on their own, they imagine some contribution could be offered to help guide them with laws and financial management for example. One of the interviewees, after searching, received training support and an incentive to help her expand her business. Although this helped in some ways and was free of charge, it was not sufficient guidance and she still could not meet her demands at the time.

According to two of the interviewees in certain industries, entrepreneurship still demonstrates male representation. It is known that females may be more interested in certain industries, but this may refer to education, as all the female entrepreneurs in this research are qualified and have certifications in their areas of activities. If the policy intends to develop skills and talents, there is an opportunity for investment in the female population.

Even if the policy objective is to develop the skills and talents to potentiate the local economy through entrepreneurship, the interviewees suggest that there is potential for investment in academics and education. Three interviewees imagined this path could have inspired them, and could also transform Ireland's entrepreneurial culture. *“Ensure that entrepreneurship is recognized as a career option in the implementation of new learning”* (DBEI, 2020a, p. 23) is declared on the policy as key actions.

6.2.3 Third objective of Policy Statement Entrepreneurship in Ireland - *Ensure the survival and growth of start-ups.*

When dealing with the main actions ensuring entrepreneurship around policy statements in Ireland, one of the main topics is "*Ensure that more people have an equal opportunity to start and run their own business*" (DBEI, 2020a, p. 23). As presented through the experience of the 10 interviewees, only 1 was served by the government program, highlighting the equality of opportunities for female entrepreneurs as stated in the policy. The actions described address support for startups with appropriate interventions such as guidance and micro-loans, but specifically mention "*Promote female entrepreneurship through identification and promotion of female role models, targeted events and awards, support for female entrepreneur networks and promotion of a dedicated area on corporate websites*" (DBEI, 2020a, p. 23).

It can be said that female entrepreneurship is a strategic action pertinent to equality in the pre-established national policy. In contrast, one Brazilian entrepreneur interviewed informs us that although she looked forward to receiving information about existing policies, guidance and financial assistance, she never did. The lack of information is also visible to one of the Irish interviewees, as she was unaware of the policy actions. She mentioned that there is no action to support small business, while she sought financial subsidy in a local agency.

Although to *ensure the survival and growth*, as the policy strategy, one of the actions promoted is the Network and there is a specific category known as "*Women in business networks*" (DBEI, 2020a, p. 44). Enterprise Ireland launched a platform of information for female companies in January 2014 in order to create a communication channel for connecting members and exploring opportunities, although none of the interviewees in this research were informed of this. These professionals have been registered from 2012 to 2020 and 6 interviewees mentioned the importance of creating an official organization, as a union of female entrepreneurs, to represent their ideas and hold events that promote interactivity and information exchange.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

Aspiring to explore female entrepreneurship in Ireland since the implementation of the Irish National Political Declaration in 2015, this research identifies some aspects about how women have remained as entrepreneurs in the formal entrepreneurial market, covering specific topics relating to female profiles within Irish entrepreneurship. Based on the pillar that women when undertaking a business are conditioned to socio-cultural factors, specific idiosyncrasies in female entrepreneurship provide an environment where gender equality is improving.

Interconnecting professional and family life factors that are incorporated into institutional theory, under the first Irish National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship period, women are proportionally having more access to education in general, with 50.6% compared to men (49.4%) (CSO, 2019). This contrasts with the analysis that women participate less than men as entrepreneurs, at 39%. 69% of women are in the customer service sector (GEM, 2018). Presented that although the indicators are subject to improvement and political actions can provide this support, 90% of these female entrepreneurs who were interviewed were unaware of the policies of good governance.

With a promising economy and the existence of several studies that affirm the correlation between female entrepreneurship and the eradication of poverty in the world, but in Ireland men are one and a half times more likely to become an entrepreneur (GEM, 2018). Female entrepreneurs still feel less prepared to manage their businesses than men, and more men see opportunities to start a business in Ireland than women (GEM, 2018). There is an opportunity for Ireland to act to support female entrepreneurship based on this information gathered from the interviewees.

These female entrepreneurs still use personal resources in their businesses and tend not to invest in their expansion, even though they see potential, due to lack of guidance and financial investment. These women prioritize their professional careers over family or potential motherhood. 90% have financial support from the family and seek emotional support, however, they report being satisfied as entrepreneurs in Ireland as finding the balance between personal and professional life is manageable. 50% of respondents reported that if it were not for the

opportunities found in Ireland, they would not have had the intention to start businesses in their countries of origin, and all interviewees recognize Ireland as a market that is conducive to entrepreneurship.

Proven by studies that progress female management of enterprises, females still face gender-specific obstacles (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020; Jennings and Brush, 2013) as a negative impact on personal problems work performance (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020). It can even be seen as conflicting work-family balance, a factor that directly interferes in the success of female-owned businesses (Kaciak and Welsh, 2020). This study shows that female entrepreneurs in the Irish market have more or less found the balance to conduct their businesses successfully and to remain active entrepreneurs. According to data from GEM (2018) between January 2015 and June 2018, more than 94,000 people started entrepreneurial activities in Ireland, proportionally 2,250 new ventures per month, with 70% of these new entrepreneurs starting their entrepreneurial activities alone.

According to Brush *et al.* (2009), when exemplifying the studies that prove the negative experience of female entrepreneurs with financial institutions, part of the interviewees affirmed that if they had a credit offer, they would invest in the expansion of their businesses, or have ongoing credit proposals. This denotes entrepreneurship potential in Ireland where some business could have been launched before getting stable and profitable. The women interviewed stated the need for accounting support due to the specificity of the subject of fees and documentation. More than 40% of those interviewed noted the importance of understanding bureaucratization and values that are correlated to the legalization of female companies and if there is the possibility of demystifying legal information to facilitate women's access to entrepreneurial information.

Although they are unaware of the policy and its purposes supporting female entrepreneurship, these women run their companies directly with their financial and intellectual resources, without participating in government programs. In this case study, the only interviewee who had initial support, when requesting financing, had her demand denied. The women point out that they would like to have easy access to professional advice and be aware of the existing policy, and advertising this could even be a solution. Female entrepreneurship and 5Ms are correlated with the institutions and the quality of governance implemented in the Irish economy, according to a literature review and research findings. As a recommendation for future research,

it would be worthwhile to study deeper each topic of the 5 Ms and to understand specifically the current context, as well researching actions that make the demand of these women more adequate. The Ms mainly refer to "Money" and "Maternity", where the greatest opportunities were identified.

About the lack of research to support female entrepreneurs in Ireland (Birdthistle, 2019; Lofstrom, 2017; O'Gorman, 2015) research can be carried out through surveys segmenting information by gender, marital status and the local specifics, to understand the challenges faced by them to base the structuring of effective policies with academic material. There are opportunities to understand the plurality of female profiles and their specific needs to undertake businesses in Ireland, for example, migrant women who experienced difficulties attracting customers, and even situations of prejudice. Diversity can also provide knowledge to policies that create business environments.

This study is aimed to understand the entrepreneurial environment for female entrepreneurs, and also explores The National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland and 5Ms in the Irish context. We can acknowledge female entrepreneurs would love to be influenced by the generalization of demands without the distinction of gender, with opportunities for all people at the same level in society, and without any inequalities, as stated by Brush *et al.* (2009). Women entrepreneurs tend to structurally deny how gender influences their needs and experiences managing their business, but in the "maternity" aspect it was brought up that the absence of co-responsibility policies reveals gender information. Addressing this aspect in future research in Ireland can contribute to the increase presence of the female in the entrepreneurial market.

Chapter 8. References

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Chapter 9. Appendices

Appendix A. Basic Statistics of Ireland, 2016.

Basic statistics of Ireland

Basic statistics of Ireland, 2016 (Number in parentheses refer to the OECD average)			
LAND, PEOPLE AND ELECTORAL CYCLE			
Population (million)	4.6		Population density per km ² 69.1 (37.2)
Under 15 (%)	20.6	(17.9)	Life expectancy (years, 2015) 81.5 (80.5)
Over 65 (%)	13.6	(16.6)	Men 79.6 (77.9)
Foreign-born (% , 2011)	16.4		Women 83.4 (83.1)
Latest 5-year average growth (%)	0.2	(0.6)	Latest general election Feb 2016
ECONOMY			
Gross domestic product (GDP)			Value added shares (%)
In current prices (billion USD)	304.8		Primary sector 1 (2.5)
In current prices (billion EUR)	275.1		Industry including construction 39.3 (26.6)
Latest 5-year average real growth (%)	7.8	(1.9)	Services 59.7 (70.9)
Per capita (000 USD PPP)	72.8	(42.1)	
GENERAL GOVERNMENT			
Per cent of GDP			
Expenditure	27.1	(41.5)	Gross financial debt 84.5 (100)
Revenue	26.4	(38.6)	Net financial debt 55.5 (65.2)
EXTERNAL ACCOUNTS			
Exchange rate (EUR per USD)	0.904		Main exports (% of total merchandise exports)
PPP exchange rate (USA = 1)	0.809		Chemicals and related products, n.e.s. 56.7
In per cent of GDP			Machinery and transport equipment 16.3
Exports of goods and services	121.7	(53.9)	Miscellaneous manufactured articles 12.6
Imports of goods and services	99.8	(49.5)	Main imports (% of total merchandise imports)
Current account balance	3.3	(0.2)	Machinery and transport equipment 39.3
Net international investment position (2014)	-93.2		Chemicals and related products, n.e.s. 21.5
			Miscellaneous manufactured articles 11.8

Appendix B. Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Interview – Women Entrepreneurs

Name:

Age:

Nationality:

Conditional questions for participation:

Company Name:

Opening Company date (register):

Company Address:

Company segment (Industry):

Part 1- Perception of the main challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Ireland to remain in the formal entrepreneurial market – Sociocultural aspects

Question 1 – Why did you become an entrepreneur in Ireland?

Question 2 - What were the challenges that you faced to become an entrepreneur in Ireland?

Question 3 – How was your experience to access financial credit to provide your business?

Question 4 - What do you think about the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Ireland to remain in the formal entrepreneurial market?

Question 5 – How do you think your family could support you as entrepreneur?

Question 6 - How your responsibilities as an entrepreneur influences your personal life in any aspects?

Question 7 – How do you think that motherhood influences your performance as an entrepreneur?

Question 8 – Which conditions you understand are required for women to remain as entrepreneurs in Ireland?

Part 2- Perception of the Irish National Political Declaration on Entrepreneurship support during this period.

Question 9 – How did you set up your own company?

Question 10 – Have you aware off any governmental entrepreneurial program since 2015? Training ? Financial ? Social?

Question 11 – Have you ever heard about the Irish entrepreneurial Policy or any program part of this policy?

Question 12 – Do you think that the Irish entrepreneurial Policy contributed for you to remain in the formal Irish market?

Question 13 – What is your expectation from the Irish entrepreneurial Policy ?

Question 14 - How the Irish National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship can achieve women entrepreneurs?

Question 15 – How is your perception of the Irish entrepreneurial market?

Question 16- What do you think that need to be done to support women entrepreneur in Ireland?

Question 17- Would you like to contribute or add anything else?