



Rethinking International Entrepreneurship Through A Gender Lens: A Systematic Literature Review

Fitriyah¹, Arsih Amalia Chandra Permata², Heri Pratikto³, Agus Hermawan⁴

¹, Faculty of Economy, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang, Indonesia

², Faculty of Administrative Science, Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia

^{1,2}, Student of the Doctoral Program in Management Science, Faculty of Economic and Business, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

^{3,4}, Faculty of Economic and Business, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: fitriyah@manajemen.uin-malang.ac.id

Abstract

This research examines the relationship between gender and international entrepreneurship by utilizing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. A total of 24 journal articles published from 2000 to 2024 were analyzed to map the theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and empirical findings related to women entrepreneurs' participation in the global market. The review revealed gender-specific such as limited access to strategic networks, financing, policy support, and cultural legitimacy-that hinder the internationalization process of women-owned businesses. On the other hand,, the existing literature highlights the crucial role of digital platforms, inclusive mentoring programs, and gender-sensitive policies in facilitating international expansion. This study also presents a conceptual framework that integrates entrepreneurial ecosystem theory, network theory, and social identity theory to explain the interaction mechanism between gender identity and ecosystem factors. Finally, this SLR identifies research gaps-including the dominance of cross-sectional designs, the lack of Global North-South comparative studies, and the lack of in-depth qualitative approaches-and formulates a future research agenda that encourages the development of gender-aware frameworks, mixed-methods designs, and cross-regional studies. The findings are expected to enrich academic understanding as well as provide policy recommendations to create a more inclusive global entrepreneurship ecosystem for women entrepreneurs.





Keywords: *Women entrepreneurship, Internationalization, Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, Gender, Systematic Literature Review*

1 INTRODUCTION

Women's participation in entrepreneurship has significantly increased over the past few decades, contributing to innovation, job creation, and inclusive economic development (Elam et al., 2018). However, women's engagement in international entrepreneurship remains disproportionately low compared to their male counterparts. Women-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often encounter specific structural, financial, and socio-cultural constraints that hinder their global expansion (Brush et al., 2019); (Akter et al., 2023) and (Bullough et al., 2022).

International entrepreneurship has traditionally been analyzed using gender-neutral frameworks such as the Uppsala model, the Resource-Based View, and network theory. However, contemporary research indicates that these classical theoretical lenses often overlook the layered realities encountered by women entrepreneurs, including differential access to capital, social networks, and institutional support (Welter, 2011 and Zahra & Wright, 2011). Moreover Coviello & Jones (2004) contend that traditional models frequently fail to capture the power dynamics and gender norms that shape international expansion strategies, while (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). As such, there is a growing call to incorporate gender perspectives into internationalization research (Henry et al., 2016).

Entrepreneurial ecosystems provide a promising analytical framework to examine the broader context that enables or constrains entrepreneurial activities (Stam, 2015; (Autio et al., 2014). However, studies on entrepreneurial ecosystems often marginalize gender or treat it as a peripheral issue. There is a lack of research that systematically explores how ecosystem elements—such as finance, policy, culture, and digital infrastructure—operate differently for women entrepreneurs seeking to expand internationally (Dey et al., 2020).

Women entrepreneurs in international markets face layered challenges, including unequal access to global value chains, limited representation in strategic business networks, and gendered institutional norms (Gifford, 2010 and Bullough et al., 2022). These challenges are often more severe in developing countries, where institutional support for women's global entrepreneurship is weak or underdeveloped. (Anderson & Ojdiran (2022); Rahayu et al., 2024 and Brush et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, emerging research highlights that digital platforms, inclusive mentorship programs, and gender-sensitive policy interventions can act as enabling factors that mitigate some of these barriers (Khoo et al., 2024 and Anggadwita & Indarti, 2023).





Digitalization, in particular, offers new channels for internationalization by lowering entry costs and improving global visibility (Ratten & Tajeddini, 2018). However, the effectiveness of such enablers depends heavily on how they are embedded within the local entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Given these dynamics, this study conducts a systematic literature review (SLR) to synthesize recent academic work on women's international entrepreneurship from the perspectives of entrepreneurship ecosystems and gender. Following the approach of (Tranfield et al., 2003) and Paul & Rosado-Serrano (2019), this review draws on 24 peer-reviewed articles published between 2000 and 2024 to map theoretical, empirical, and methodological developments.

The aim is to provide an overview of theoretical and methodological frameworks applied in the study of women's internationalization of entrepreneurship, examine the extent to which regional context and institutional-cultural factors influence the dynamics of women's internationalization of entrepreneurship, and identify key gaps that need to be addressed to strengthen the gender perspective in international entrepreneurship research. This article contributes by proposing a conceptual framework and identifying research gaps that can inform future studies and policy efforts towards a more gender-inclusive global entrepreneurship.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Uppsala Model, Business Network Internationalization, and Global Born Theory

The Uppsala internationalization model, explains that firms expand internationally gradually through a process of experiential learning and network strengthening (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). This model emphasizes psychic distance and direct learning from market experiences, which may indirectly disadvantage women entrepreneurs due to their limited access to international learning networks (Brush et al., 2019). However, the emergence of globally born firms—that is, firms that enter international markets right from the start—challenges the assumptions of the Uppsala model and opens up opportunities for faster pathways to internationalization, especially in the digital age (Oviatt & Phillips McDougall, 1994); Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019).

For women entrepreneurs, digital platforms can lower the initial barriers to global expansion, but are still dependent on equal access to digital infrastructure, social legitimacy, and strategic networks that are still often gender-biased (Ratten & Tajeddini, 2018 ; Pergelova et al., 2019)





2.2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Theory

Entrepreneurial ecosystem theory emphasizes that entrepreneurial ecosystems are formed from dynamic interactions between various actors (e.g. entrepreneurs, financial institutions, government, universities, and support organizations) and formal and informal institutions that influence each other and create conditions for the birth and development of ventures (Stam, 2015 and Autio et al., 2014). Spigel (2017) adds that ecosystems are relational and rely on networks of trust, shared norms and collective capabilities that facilitate access to resources-including capital, information and markets-as well as innovation.

However, most ecosystem studies still ignore the gender dimension explicitly (Brush et al., 2019). A gender-perspective ecosystem approach demands the identification of systemic barriers specific to women entrepreneurs, such as more limited access to financing, policies that are less responsive to women's needs, lack of digital technology training, and lack of gender-oriented mentoring programs (Anggadwita & Indarti, 2024; Prada-Villamizar & Sánchez-Peinado, 2021). Thus, a deeper analysis of the mechanisms of resource allocation and distribution in the ecosystem can reveal points of leverage to strengthen the role of women in internationalization activities.

2.3 Network Theory

Network Theory explains how social and business relations-both formal and informal-function as channels of information transfer, trust building, and identification of market opportunities that are crucial in the internationalization process (Coviello & Jones, 2004). Ellis (2011) asserts that position in the network-such as access to “structural holes” and the strength of “weak ties”-affects an entrepreneur's ability to acquire cross-border market knowledge and build legitimacy.

However, women entrepreneurs are often marginalized from strategic networks that provide “bridging” to global markets (Elam et al., 2018). Hewapathirana (2011) shows that women rely more on informal networks (family or diaspora), which tend to have limited resources compared to formal professional networks. Marlow & Mcadam (2015) emphasize the importance of developing inclusive networks-through gender-sensitive networking programs and structured mentoring-to open up access to capital and international opportunities for women entrepreneurs.



2.4 Feminist Theory and Feminist Institutionalism

Feminist theory provides a critical framework for analyzing how structural inequalities, cultural norms, and institutional rules create gender inequality in entrepreneurship (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). Feminist institutionalism specifically highlights how gender is internalized in formal policies and informal norms, such as trade regulations, credit systems, and government support Marlow & Mcadam (2015). This perspective is important to explain why women-led businesses remain marginalized in international markets despite the global gender equality discourse.

Feminist standpoint theory (FST) and post-structural feminism are also beginning to be applied in entrepreneurship research, particularly to explore women's experiences of running international businesses (Henry et al., 2016). However, the integration of these theories in mainstream international business literature is still minimal.

2.6 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory describes how individuals' affiliation with a particular social group influences their behavior, perceptions and strategic decisions (Tajfel, 1986 and Hennessy et al., 1999). In the context of international entrepreneurship, this theory is used to explain how gender identity interacts with social expectations and influences entrepreneurial intentions (Marlow & Mcadam, 2015).

Furthermore, the theory highlights the importance of identity salience-the extent to which gender roles are central to self-awareness in a given situation-which can influence self-efficacy and strategic decision-making in global expansion (Patzelt, 2018). When cultural norms demand dual roles as homemaker and business leader, women entrepreneurs often experience identity conflict that suppresses confidence in contract negotiations or cross-border partnerships (Bullough et al., 2022). Taşçı (2021) adds that in societies with strong gender norms, the threat of stigma ("stereotype threat") can decrease motivation and internationalization intentions, unless counterbalanced by identity work-a cognitive strategy to redefine norms and strengthen self-view as a global entrepreneur.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

In order to compile the scholarly literature on women's participation in international entrepreneurship, this study used a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology. The SLR procedure consists of six stages according to Chigbu et al. (2023), namely:

Searching, an initial search was conducted in Scopus and Web of Science (2000-2024) using Boolean ("women entrepreneurs*" OR "female entrepreneurs*") AND



("internationalization" OR "global expansion") AND ("entrepreneurial ecosystem" OR "entrepreneurial support") with title, abstract, and keyword filters (Tranfield et al., 2003; Snyder, 2019)

Identification excluded articles that were not relevant to the topic of gender in international entrepreneurship or that were not available in English (Chigbu et al., 2023). The identification approach used was concept-centered, exploring how each article explained women's involvement, the theory used, and the context of internationalization (Tranfield et al., 2003).

Selection: Final selection was based on four inclusion criteria: (1) articles were published in peer-reviewed journals, (2) explicitly addressed women-led MSMEs, (3) addressed the internationalization dimension, and (4) were methodologically transparent (Snyder, 2019).

Reading and Summarizing: Articles were read in full and summarized in a literature matrix, noting years, theory, context, methods, and key findings (Tranfield et al., 2003).

Synthesizing: Synthesis was conducted using thematic coding and the Theory-Context-Characteristics-Methodology (TCCM) framework to map research strengths, limitations, and gaps, including method comparisons and regional representations (Chigbu et al., 2023; Snyder, 2019).

Referencing: All sources were cited according to the latest APA format, with the year of publication and DOI noted to ensure traceability (Tranfield et al., 2003).

4 RESULT

4.1 Research Resume

Based on the review of various scientific articles that have been reviewed on women's entrepreneurship in the context of internationalization of MSMEs, a more in-depth picture can be given of how the theoretical and methodological frameworks related to the internationalization of women's entrepreneurship, how global dynamics in the context of internationalization of women's entrepreneurship and the main gaps that need to be overcome to strengthen the gender perspective in international entrepreneurship research. Below is a table of relevant research:





Tabel 1. Review Article

No.	References	Method	Key Findings
1.	Does Social Desirability of Entrepreneurship Matter for Early-Stage Entrepreneurs' Internationalization? Capelleras et al. (2025), <i>Business Research Quarterly</i>	Multilevel quantitative analysis (GEM data)	Social desirability negatively affects internationalization; economic freedom moderates positively.
2.	Mapping the barriers to socio-economic freedom in internationalisation of women-owned SMEs: evidence from a developing country. Akter et al. (2023). <i>Journal of International Management</i>	exploratory sequential mixed-methods design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are three dimensions of socio-economic barriers in socio-interactional patterns, socio-psychological attachment and socio-cultural embeddedness • Social, psychological and cultural dimensions significantly hinder the acquisition of market knowledge and international experience, which in turn reduces the internationalization capacity of women-owned SMEs in developing countries.
3.	Thematic analysis of women entrepreneurship in the internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) Anggadwita, G., & Indarti, N. (2025). <i>Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies</i> , 17(1), 45-72",	Content analysis	Six key research streams in women's entrepreneurship and SME internationalization—export behavior and gender; entrepreneurship and economic development; gender, innovation, and performance; women in international business and management; SME internationalization processes; and business/export experience—and highlights
4.	Women entrepreneurship in the internationalization of SMEs: A bibliometric analysis for future research directions. Anggadwita, G., & Indarti, N. (2023). <i>European Business Review</i> , 35(5), 763-796.	Bibliometric and content analysis	Publication trends from 1994 to September 2022 show a growing body of women's SME internationalization research in top journals. Export remains the dominant entry mode alongside alternatives, and studies draw on internationalization, resource-based, feminist, and international entrepreneurship theories; this paper proposes an AMO-based framework for future research.





5.	Challenges Facing Women Entrepreneurship: A Developing Country Perspective. Ssekiziyivu, B., Takwi, F. M., & Kabahinda, E. (2025). <i>Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies</i> , 11(1), 37-48.	Phenomenological approach	Provide empirical evidence of the role of women's entrepreneurship and the challenges it faces. need to provide women with entrepreneurial skills so that they can manage their businesses appropriately and facilitate access to finance to scale up businesses globally.
6.	Women entrepreneurship in international trade: Bridging the gap by bringing feminist theories into entrepreneurship and internationalization theories. Akter, M., Rahman, M., & Radicic, D. (2019). <i>Sustainability</i> , 11(22), 6230.	Sequential explanatory mixed methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 6 factors of barriers to socio-economic freedom (BSEF), three of which are entrepreneur's social supports, gender tradition and gendered legislation that influence women's entrepreneurship • BESF significantly influences market knowledge and business experience • Dimensions in BESF can be used as guidelines for policy makers to increase women's participation in international trade
7.	A systematic review of women's entrepreneurship and internationalization literature. Moreira, J., Marques, C. S., Braga, A., & Ratten, V. (2019). <i>Thunderbird International Business Review</i> , 61(4), 635-648.	Bibliometric Indicators and Content Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trend of publications on Women's entrepreneurship is increasing <p>There are three main clusters epistemological position & gender; cultural & social reasons; motivations, business characteristics & performance.</p>
8.	A gendered look at entrepreneurship ecosystems. Brush, C., Edelman, L. F., Manolova, T., & Welter, F. (2019) <i>Small Business Economics</i> , 53, 393-408.	Conceptual framework and Systematic Literature Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional level: often hidden gendered regulations, norms and cognitions (e.g. property ownership, paid leave) • Organizational level: gender-biased division of labor, symbols, and social structures (e.g. horizontal & vertical segregation, media) • Individual level: gender identities, stereotypes and role models that influence the intentions and perceptions of women entrepreneurs
9.	Democratizing entrepreneurship? Digital technologies and the internationalization of female-led SMEs.	Logistic regression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front-end & back-end systems directly increase exports; • Market intelligence mediates 19–29% of the effect of digital tech → exports • The effect of digital tech on market intelligence is stronger for female SMEs





	Pergelova, A., Manolova, T., Simeonova-Ganeva, R., & Yordanova, D. (2019). <i>Journal of Small Business Management</i> , 57(1), 14-39.		
10.	Women's entrepreneurship report 2018/2019. Elam, A. B., Brush, C. G., Greene, P. G., Baumer, B., Dean, M., Heavlow, R., & Global Entrepreneurship Research Association. (2019).	Global survey-based report	Women entrepreneurs face lower participation in international markets, especially in developing economies.
11.	<i>Women's Entrepreneurship Report 2020/2021</i> . GEM. (2020). Global Entrepreneurship Monitor.	Global Survey	Despite higher startup rates in some regions, women's firms tend to remain local.
12.	Women's entrepreneurship and internationalization: Patterns and trends. Ratten, V., & Tajeddini, K. (2018). <i>International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy</i> , 38(9/10), 780-793.	Literature Review	There are three main streams in women's entrepreneurship, namely philosophy, management and motivation. it is very open to new research with themes around women's entrepreneurship and internationalization.
13.	<i>The social psychology of entrepreneurial behavior</i> (pp. 359-385). Shaver, K. G. (2010). Springer New York.	literature review and synthesis	Gender identity and stereotypes (masculinity vs. femininity) influence opportunity perceptions and entrepreneurial intentions through two main mechanisms: - Stereotypes act as cognitive shortcuts, individuals who perceive masculine opportunities are quicker to recognize opportunities that fit their stereotypes, while those perceived as "feminine" are more likely to be overlooked. - Gender identity influences self-efficacy and attitude





14.	<p><i>Entrepreneurship in developing countries</i> (pp. 485-515).</p> <p>Acs, Z. J., & Virgill, N. (2010). Springer New York.</p>	Conceptual literature review) dan framework building,	Gendered cultural and institutional norms limit women's participation in internationalization activities through several main mechanisms including: perceptions of entrepreneurship that are often associated with masculine characteristics, cultural barriers as "barriers", institutional bias and gender perspective regulations and government interventions
15	<p>Gender and entrepreneurship research: A review of methodological approaches.</p> <p>Henry, C., Foss, L., & Ahl, H. (2016). <i>International Small Business Journal</i>, 34(3), 217-241.</p>	Systematic Literature Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90 percent of studies used cross-sectional surveys and regression/logit analysis, with convenience/random sampling, and a few life-history or ethnography. • Gender is often treated as a variable; Feminist standpoint theory (FST) began to rise in the 1990s, and post-structural feminism (PSF) emerged after 2003; • There is a contextual gap: the majority of studies are acontextual, focusing on the 'big three' (US/UK/Aus) and rarely comparing other sectors or countries.
16.	<p>Gradual internationalization vs born-global/international new venture models: A review and research agenda.</p> <p>Paul, J., & Rosado-Serrano, A. (2019). <i>International marketing review</i>, 36(6), 830-858.</p>	Systematic Literature Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dominant research methods are: case studies, regression, survey, and mixed-methods. • Theoretical fragmentation: studies on Uppsala vs born-global have not been integrated • There is still a lack of cross-industry and cross-country research, the definition of born-global varies, and the measurement of speed/intensity is not yet uniform. • The TCCM framework is proportioned to compile a research agenda (Theory, Context, Characteristics, Methodology).





17.	<p>The role of social identity in internationalization of women-owned small businesses in Sri Lanka.</p> <p>Hewapathirana, G. I. (2011). <i>Journal of Asia business studies</i>, 5(2), 172-193.</p>	Multiple qualitative case study	<p>The role of women in international entrepreneurship can be seen from the perspective of Social Identity Processes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Categorization: differentiation through unique achievements - Social comparison: emphasis on product/service excellence - Social identification: philanthropy & organizational leadership build employee loyalty.
18.	<p>Internationalization and innovation in nascent companies: does gender matter?.</p> <p>Alves, M. F. R., Galina, S. V. R., Macini, N., Cagica Carvalho, L., & Costa, T. (2017). <i>Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development</i>, 24(4), 887-905.</p>	Hierarchical log-linear analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low female penetration in high-tech sectors (odds ratio men:women $\approx 3 \times$) • Innovation increases female exports in developing countries • Opportunity: women are $\approx 1.5 \times$ less likely to start a business based on opportunities in developing countries • Skills: women still have lower export odds compared to men • Policies are needed to increase women's access to high-tech sectors, internationalization skills training, innovation support in developing countries, and opportunity-based programs for female entrepreneurs.
19.	<p>Reflections on women in internationalization.</p> <p>Taşçı, G. (2021). <i>Kıbrıslı Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi</i>, 16(2), 703-724.</p>	<p>Orientational qualitative review berbasis socialist feminist theory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are less internationally mobile due to family burdens, bureaucracy, and procedural bias • Collaboration spaces are dominated by men • Other Barriers: masculine 'rule the game' image, implicit discrimination, lack of role models, time constraints, family responsibilities. • Politics & Policy: Develop affirmative policies (quotas, special funding, removal of bureaucratic barriers) to increase women's visibility and mobility.





20.	<p>Entrepreneurial orientation as an antecedent to the rapid internationalization of Moroccan SMEs in the women's entrepreneurship field.</p> <p>Rouijel, M. R. (2024). <i>Business, Management and Economics Engineering</i>, 22(1), 138-155.</p>	Kuantitatif eksploratori	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Entrepreneurial Orientation (IEO) positively and significantly drives the adoption of Niche Strategy by Moroccan female entrepreneurs. This Niche strategy contributes significantly to Rapid Internationalization Mediation analysis confirms that the effect of IEO on accelerated internationalization is mainly channeled through niche strategy
21.	<p>Perspectives, progress and prospects; researching women's entrepreneurship in emerging economies.</p> <p>Anderson, A., & Ojediran, F. (2022). <i>Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies</i>, 14(2), 292-315</p>	Thematic Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The literature on women's entrepreneurship in developing economies is still dominated by descriptive writing with few theoretical contributions. This study highlights the multiple barriers—cultural, institutional, and social—that entrepreneurs face Significant regional variations (e.g. MENA vs. South Asia vs. Eastern Europe)
22.	<p>Women's entrepreneurship and culture: gender role expectations and identities, societal culture, and the entrepreneurial environment.</p> <p>Bullough, A., Guelich, U., Manolova, T. S., & Schjoedt, L. (2022). <i>Small Business Economics</i>, 58(2), 985-996.</p>	Orientational conceptual review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender role expectations and identity: Emphasizes how traditional expectations influence women's biases and self-efficacy. Socio-cultural dimensions: GLOBE dimensions vary across countries and moderate women's entrepreneurial opportunities. Entrepreneurial environment: Local/global policies, regulations, and networks collectively shape women's access to resources and markets.
23.	<p>Women entrepreneurship: A systematic review to outline the boundaries of scientific literature.</p> <p>Cardella, G. M., Hernández-Sánchez, B. R., & Sánchez-García, J. C. (2020). <i>Frontiers in psychology</i>, 11, 536630.</p>	Bibliometrics Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publications on women's entrepreneurship increased rapidly from 2006 to 2019. There are six main theme clusters—barriers, human & social capital, culture & gender, family support, social entrepreneurship, and feminist theory—that describe the focus and development of the field of women's entrepreneurship



24.	Women entrepreneurship and sustainable development: bibliometric analysis and emerging research trends. Raman, R., Subramaniam, N., Nair, V. K., Shivdas, A., Achuthan, K., & Nedungadi, P. (2022). <i>Sustainability</i> , 14(15), 9160.	Systematic Literature Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDG Focus: Research concentrates on SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), emphasizing policies, MSMEs, and cultural norms in women's empowerment. • COVID-19 Studies (n=80): Predominantly from developing countries (India 20%, Indonesia 13%), highlighting business process digitalization and gender-supportive crisis policies.
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Source: Data processed by researchers

4.2 Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Research on women's international entrepreneurial processes typically rests on a combination of theory-based frameworks and advanced methodological designs. On the theoretical side, Internationalization Theory (Oviatt & Phillips McDougall, 1994) serves as the principal foundation for explaining entry-mode mechanisms and the speed of market expansion, complemented by the Resource-Based View, which highlights a firm's unique capabilities, and by feminist theory, which positions gender as a central construct (Brush et al., 2019). Several studies also integrate Network Theory to examine the role of social ties in acquiring cross-border market knowledge, as well as TCCM (Theory-Context-Characteristics-Methodology) and AMO (Antecedents-Mediators-Outcomes) models to map the complex interrelations among constructs (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019 ; Anggadwita & Indarti, 2023).

From a methodological perspective, three main approaches predominate. First, bibliometric and content-analysis techniques—employed by Moreira et al. (2019) and (Anggadwita & Indarti, 2023) are used to map publication trends, thematic clusters, and dominant theoretical paradigms. Second, Systematic Literature Reviews conducted under PRISMA protocols or analogous frameworks prioritize transparency in the search, selection, and synthesis of empirical studies (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019 and Henry et al., 2016). Third, mixed-methods designs, particularly sequential exploratory designs (qual → quant), as in Akter et al. (2019), allow researchers to conceptualize gender-specific constructs through interviews and focus-group discussions, and subsequently validate these constructs with PLS-SEM to test hierarchical models of internationalization barriers. The richness of these theoretical frameworks combined with methodological diversity strengthens both



internal and external validity, while opening avenues for longitudinal and cross-national designs in future research.

4.3 Influence of Regional and Institutional–Cultural Contexts

A review of 24 studies demonstrates that regional context and institutional–cultural factors jointly shape women’s internationalization trajectories. In many Global North countries, relatively stable formal institutions—such as transparent trade regulations, strong intellectual-property protections, and accessible funding—facilitate women entrepreneurs’ adoption of entry modes like joint ventures and foreign direct investment without major early-stage export barriers (Cardella et al., 2020 and Pergelova et al., 2019). Moreover, more egalitarian social norms—measured via gender egalitarianism indices—support female entrepreneurs’ self-efficacy and professional networks, thereby increasing their likelihood of entering foreign markets (Bullough et al., 2022).

Conversely, in much of the Global South, socio-cultural constraints (e.g., dual domestic burdens, feminine stereotypes that discourage risk-taking) and institutional biases (complex bureaucratic procedures, corruption, weak contract enforcement) significantly hinder women entrepreneurs’ ability to accumulate market knowledge and international experience (Akter et al., 2019 and Brush et al., 2019). Studies in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, for example, find that socially embedded cultural barriers depress export initiatives, although improved institutions at later growth stages can mitigate these negative effects (Akter et al., 2019 ; Pergelova et al., 2019 and Alves et al., 2017).

Accordingly, these macro-contextual differences call for tailored policy responses: in the Global North, efforts can shift toward augmenting innovation capacity and fostering international network collaboration, whereas in the Global South, institutional reforms—simplifying regulations, gender-norm change campaigns, and mentorship programs—are needed to establish a robust foundation for women entrepreneurs’ internationalization (Akter et al., 2023 and Bullough et al., 2022).

4.4 Research Gaps and Future Agenda

Despite the growing body of literature on international entrepreneurship, gender-integrated research still faces several fundamental shortcomings. First, most studies employ a “gender as variable” approach, comparing male and female performance without exploring the socio-cultural mechanisms underlying those differences (Henry et al., 2016). Second, there is a theoretical gap marked by a lack of truly gender-aware frameworks, whereby feminist concepts are borrowed but not reconstructed within internationalization theory (





(Marlow & McAdam, 2013). Third, a methodological gap arises from the predominance of cross-sectional surveys and broad quantitative analyses, whereas in-depth qualitative approaches—such as ethnography, longitudinal case studies, or discourse analysis—remain scarce (Henry et al., 2016). Fourth, a contextual gap is evident in the dearth of comparative studies between the Global North and South, despite stark differences in cultural norms, public policies, and institutional infrastructures (Anderson & Ojediran, 2022). Consequently, although research identifies gendered barriers in internationalization (e.g., stereotypes, dual burdens, institutional discrimination), translation of these findings into context-specific policy recommendations remains suboptimal.

Therefore, this SLR emphasizes the need for: developing theoretical frameworks that integrate feminist epistemologies with international entrepreneurship theory; employing mixed-method designs that leverage both quantitative and qualitative strengths to uncover the processes and meanings behind the data; and conducting cross-regional research that explicitly compares the Global North and South to formulate culturally and institutionally relevant strategies for strengthening women entrepreneurs' internationalization.

5 CONCLUSION

This literature review shows that research on women's international entrepreneurship has adopted a variety of theoretical frameworks—from Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Theory (Stam, 2015; Autio et al., 2014) and Network Theory (Coviello & Jones, 2004) to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1986)—but the implementation of an explicit gender perspective is still limited (Brush et al., 2019). SLR findings reveal that social constructions of gender influence perceptions of opportunities and entry mode strategies, especially in ecosystems that are not yet responsive to the needs of women entrepreneurs (Bullough et al., 2022; Taşçı, 2021). In addition, the variability of regional contexts—between the Global North and South—reiterates the need for comparative studies to understand how institutions and cultural norms interact with gender in the internationalization process (Anggadwita & Indarti, 2024; Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019). However, research design limitations—particularly the dominance of cross-sectional and quantitative studies—signal the need for mixed and longitudinal methodologies that can capture temporal and cultural dynamics (Henry et al., 2016).

As such, this article recommends a future research agenda that (1) develops a truly gender-aware theoretical framework by integrating feminist epistemology into international entrepreneurship theory, (2) applies mixed-methods designs to explore the qualitative processes behind quantitative findings, and (3) conducts cross-country studies





that explicitly compare the Global North and South to formulate gender-inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem policies and practices. The implementation of these recommendations is expected to not only expand academic understanding, but also provide guidelines for policymakers and practitioners to create a more equitable and sustainable global ecosystem for international entrepreneurs.

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