

“Exploring Entrepreneurship among Immigrant Women in Brandon, Manitoba”

Shirlyn Minoja Kunaratnam

MA Candidate

Department of Rural Development

Supervisor: Dr. Wilder Robles

Co-Supervisor: Dr. Kenneth Bessant



**BRANDON
UNIVERSITY**

Outline of the Presentation

- Introduction: The Purpose, Objective, and Importance of the Study
- Background
- Working Conceptual Definition
- Theoretical Framework
- Method
- Findings
- Policy Recommendations
- Conclusions

The Purpose, Objective, and Importance of the Study

This study examines the challenges and opportunities faced by immigrant women entrepreneurs in Brandon, Manitoba based on in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions conducted .

....continuation

- Canada is a country that welcomes thousands of thousands of immigrants from all over the world every year.
- Among them are women entrepreneurs who arrive in Canada with high hopes to build a better life for their families and newly hosted communities.
- Although their success is vital to Canada's economic prosperity, immigrant women entrepreneurs face challenges or barriers that undermine their economic potential

....continuation

- This study examines the challenges that immigrant women entrepreneurs face in Brandon, Manitoba.
- It also explores potential opportunities that might help them to unleash their economic potential.
- This study is important because there is no published research currently available dealing with the topic.
- No statistical data on immigrant entrepreneurship in Brandon.

Background

- Brandon is a rural city with an increased influx of immigrants since 2007.
- The immigrant population in Brandon is 18%; and 68% of immigrants arrived under the economic category (Statistics Canada, 2021).
- As in many other cities in Canada, immigrants in Brandon face several challenges or barriers, including:
 - Language proficiency
 - Labour market discrimination
 - Recognition of their foreign professional credentials
 - Limited access to services
 - Gender and cultural discrimination

....continuation

Regardless of facing several challenges or barriers, immigrants, particularly women entrepreneurs, have contributed to the growing economic vitality of the City of Brandon by:

- Actively participating in minimum-wage labour markets (i.e. Maple Leaf; Sobeys; Safeway; Home Depot)
- Establishing small business services (i.e. Karla's International Foods; Sabor Latino; Coffee Culture)

If the above-described barriers can be addressed, the City of Brandon can have a more dynamic and prosperous immigrant entrepreneur community.

Working Definition

Definition of entrepreneurship in the context of immigrants:

“Entrepreneurship is a risk-taking journey of transforming innovative ideas into profitable ventures by addressing market needs and attaining financial independence and satisfaction”.



Key Research Questions

- a. What are the key challenges or barriers immigrant women face in Brandon that encourage entrepreneurship?
- b. What are the specific needs of immigrant women entrepreneurs in Brandon?
- c. What collective entrepreneurship opportunities are available in Brandon for immigrant women who are interested in collaborating with others?
- d. What type of businesses immigrant women do in Brandon?

Theoretical Framework

This research study employs a Gender and Development Theory (GAD) to examine the complex and unequal role played by women in the social development process. It does so by:

- Examining structural factors that limit women's access to resources and opportunities such as:
 - Poverty and income inequality
 - Gender-based discrimination
 - Restricted access to health and education services

....continuation

- GAD Theory:
 - Helps to understand how immigrant women entrepreneurs face challenges differently in male-dominated entrepreneurship environments. Some samples:
 - Access to financial resources
 - Household responsibilities
- GAD also helps to integrate gender perspectives in the policies related to economic development

Methods and Participants



- Participants selection: Snowball sampling
- Tools used: individual interviews; focus group discussions; and semi-structured questionnaire
- 5 interviews with service organizations that support immigrant women in Brandon
 - Westman Immigration Services (WIS)
 - Community Futures
 - Brandon Local Immigration Partnerships (BLIPs)
 - City of Brandon
 - Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO)
 - Brandon Chamber of Commerce

...continuation

- 5 focus group discussions with six immigrant communities
 - Indians (5 participants)
 - Nigerians (5 participants)
 - Latin American (5 participants)
 - Filipinos (5 participants)
 - Ghanaians and Jamaicans (5 participants)
- 5 individual interviews with other women immigrant communities (Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Chinese, Ukrainian and Ethiopian)

[This research study was approved by BUREC.](#)

Data Analysis Methods

- Recorded data transcribed
- Excel used to enter data and for systematic coding
- Themes and patterns identified



Key Research Findings



1. Immigrant women are motivated to become entrepreneurs to improve their socio-economic situation despite the challenges or barriers they face.

Challenges/ Barriers

- Lack of English proficiency (15)
- Low-wage employment (22)
- Non-recognition of foreign professional degrees/credentials (18)
- Lack of Canadian work experience (8)
- Absence of social and professional networks (5)
- Perceived gender discrimination (6)
- Multiple part-time jobs (6)
- Lack of childcare space (15)
- Stressful work-family life (13)



Immigrant Women Entrepreneurship



- Financial security and independence (15)
- Experience in entrepreneurship (15)
- Motivated to start new small-business ventures (8)
- Skilled in identifying market opportunities (10)
- Entrepreneurship provides better opportunities to balance family-work responsibilities (10)

Motivators

Note: Responses represent the number of 30 participants

Immigrant Women's Entrepreneurship Sectors

Sector	Country of origin & number of women entrepreneurs
Food and Restaurant	Chinese (1)
	Filipino (1)
	Latin American (1)
	Indian (2)
Clothing and other accessories	Filipino (1)
	Ghana (2)
	Nigerian (1)
	Indian (1)
Hair, skin, make up treatment and Massage therapy	Filipino (1)
	Jamaican (1)
	Nigerian (1)
	Latin American (1)
	Indian(1)
Daycare	Filipino (1)
Consultancy	Ghana (1)
	Jamaican (1)
Buying and Selling	Nigerian (1)
Language class/ studio	Latin American (1)
Printing (apparel)	Latin American (1)
Medical lab	Latin American (1)



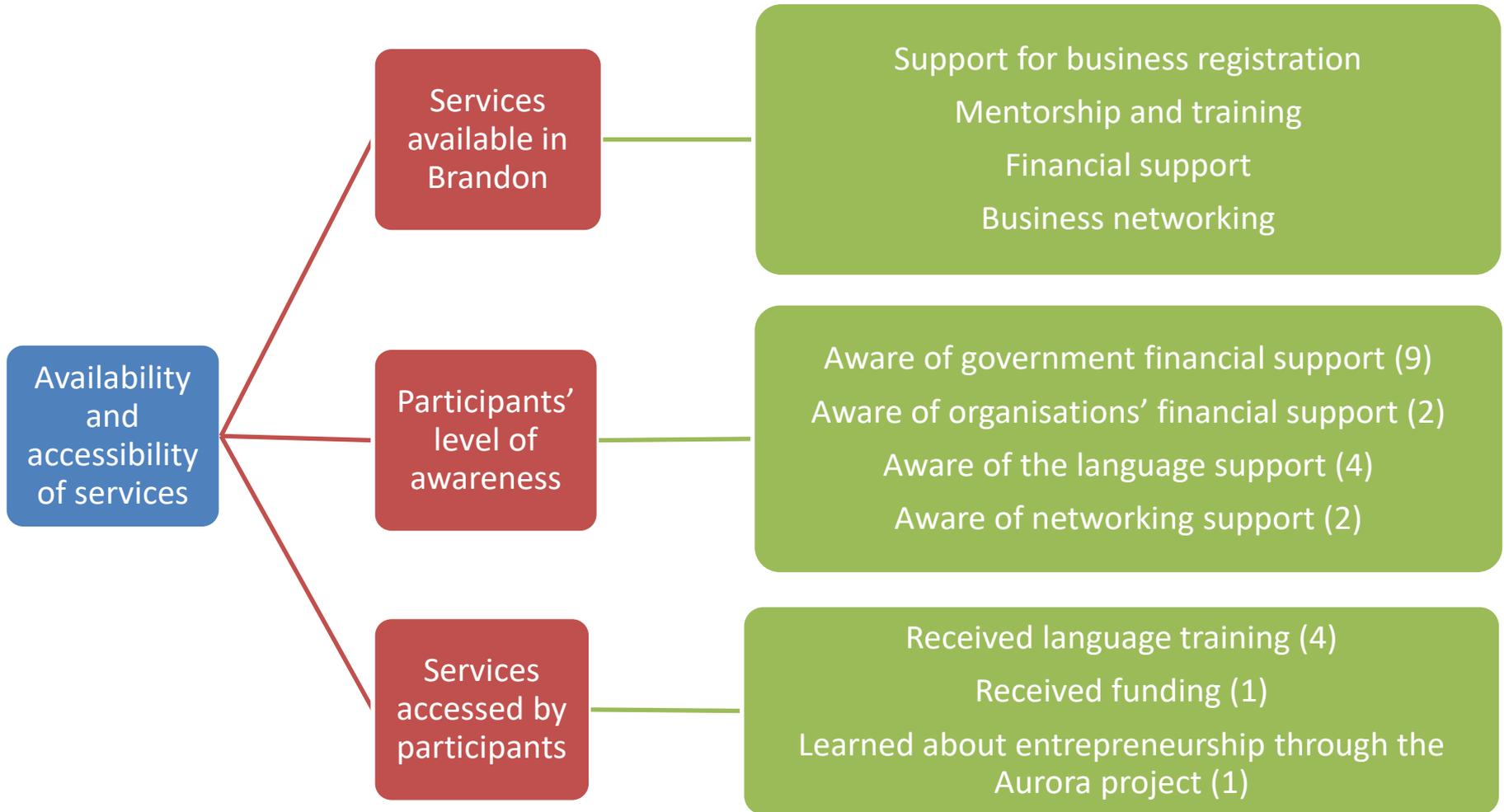
2. Brandon does not have adequate and suitable programs and services to meet the needs of immigrant women entrepreneurs.

2. 1 Needs of Women Immigrant Entrepreneurs

The needs of immigrant women entrepreneurs in Brandon	Total answers	Immigrant women	Organizations
Limited financial support for small businesses	27	23	4
Lack of information related to business start ups	25	21	4
Lack of knowledge in drafting a Canadian business plan	22	21	1
Navigating the Canadian registration process	17	13	4
Lack of input materials for services	17	15	2
No mentorship or training programs	14	13	1
Lack of affordable physical space to start small business	12	11	1
Limited access to business networks and services	11	9	2
No start-up incubator programs	2	2	
No personal/business credit history	2	1	1

Note: Responses represent the number of 35 participants.

2.2 Support services available in Brandon



Note: Responses represent the number of 30 immigrant women entrepreneurs

3. Immigrant women entrepreneurs share mistrust about collective entrepreneurship because of limited understanding.

Mistrust factors in collective entrepreneurship

- There is an absence of collective entrepreneurship initiatives in Brandon to help immigrant women learn about the benefits of collaboration.
- Trust issues arise when financial matters are mentioned or discussed.
- Immigrant women are reluctant to participate in collective entrepreneurship without a clear understanding of the norms, regulations, and responsibilities of the parties.
- If collective entrepreneurship provides opportunities for immigrant women, 93% of them are willing to participate in their own communities but not with other communities.

Policy Recommendations



1. Strengthen English language training for immigrant women entrepreneurs to effectively participate within local, provincial, and national Canadian business circles.
2. Provide immigrant women entrepreneurs training on navigating Canadian business norms, regulations, and practices. Sample: How to register businesses in Canada under appropriate categories?
3. Establish mentorship programs and training sessions to help immigrant women entrepreneurs understand and engage in collective entrepreneurship.
4. Encourage better collaborations among Brandon business-oriented organizations to provide better services to immigrant women entrepreneurs.
5. Promote policies that reduce barriers for immigrant women entrepreneurs, including financial incentives, equal access to opportunities, and fostering an inclusive business environment.

Conclusion

- Despite facing challenges and barriers, immigrant women entrepreneurs are determined to further enhance the well-being of their families and host community (Brandon).
- Brandon needs secondary data to understand entrepreneurial trends, opportunities, and immigrant interests and to measure the impact of support services. Without this data, effective strategies cannot be developed.
- The City of Brandon, the Brandon Chamber of Commerce, and Immigrant Service Providers must play a collaborative role in this process.

Empowering Immigrant Women Entrepreneurs

City of Brandon

- Simplified guidelines on business registration and operation by-laws
- Manage effectively provincial/ federal funding for immigrant service providers
- Provide affordable childcare support

Brandon Chamber of Commerce

- Provide seed funding
- Provide mentorship and business skills training
- Provide business access connections and networks
- Promote small-scale business-economic models

Immigrant Women Entrepreneurs

Immigrant Services Providers

- Provide English business language training
- Provide affordable physical space to start businesses
- Provide workshops on Canadian business customs and practices



Thank you