

Food for Thought? A Tale of Two African Women Businesses

Nnamdi O. Madichie

*Centre for Research & Enterprise
London School of Business and Management,
1 Malet Street, London Bloomsbury WC1E 7JN*

Ebo Hinson

*Free State Business School & Centre for Sustainability and
Enterprise Development, University of Ghana*

Abstract

This study highlights the challenges faced by women business owners (WBOs) in what is traditionally a woman dominated sector – i.e. catering. Drawing upon two cases, based on completed in-depth interviews from Anglophone Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, the study highlights some of the shared challenges of WBOs in SSA. While unpacking the WBOs' background (nationality, ethnicity, education, family etc.); prior motivations (why they chose to start-up); challenges (including start-up capital, government regulations, personal achievements), and plans for the future – the study seeks to spur further research enquiry on the subject and especially so in the context of SSA. Ultimately, it is hoped that future studies may begin to explore the gender compositions of ownership of catering businesses across SSA and whether there are any regional or sub-regional disparities.

Keywords: *Women business owners, Food service, Nigeria, Ghana*

1. Introduction

This study focuses on two women businesses in West Africa – notably from Nigeria (Mama Cass) and Ghana (Auntie Muni).

Collectively, the two cases of women-owned businesses (WBOs) can be conceived as part of the hospitality industry (broadly defined) in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA); a restaurant operation in the case of Nigeria (Mama Cass, which is on course to formalization), and *Auntie Muni*, a supposedly roadside restaurant in the Labone Cantonments area of Ghana's Greater Accra region (see Madichie and Hinson, 2013, 2014). Mama Cass in Nigeria is on the verge of an IPO (initial public offering) and Auntie Muni is searching for space and financial resource for expansion (see Madichie and Hinson, 2014).

The key rationale for the study is based on the evidence that SSA has been making news headlines, for the right reasons, in recent times. For example, in Nigeria, the newly elected President Buhari is waging an all-out war on corruption and bringing some stability back to the sector, whilst in Ghana, the first locally manufactured and assembled cars nicknamed Katanka vehicles have been recently reported in the media.³ However, when it comes to the entrepreneurship discourse, none of these countries have been very well reported in the literature – perhaps for a very good reason, which would be highlighted as this study unfolds. Indeed the two cases, which are based on completed in-depth interviews with the two WBOs highlight some of the shared challenges of women entrepreneurship in SSA – with arguable policy and research implications. A multiple case approach of this nature is not unusual as Chirico (2008) adopted the same approach in his study of knowledge accumulation in family firms.

Following this opening section, we provide some background and methodological information in section 2. This

³ See Mensah, K. (Al-Jazeera, 24 August 2014) Ghana's talented but ignored inventors; and Vanguard (22 March 2014) From Spare Parts Trader to Motor Giant: The story of Innoson.

is followed with a profile of the sampled countries from which the cases were derived, in section 3. In section 4, we delve into a discussion of the cases in more depth. The article concludes in section 5 with implications.

2. Case Background & Methodology

This study is based on two case studies of West African WBOs with a view to narrowing down a previous four-country study (see Madichie and Hinson, 2014) highlighting geographical similarities and/ or differences in WBO activity.

The first case from Nigeria (Mama Cass) was incidental as captured in a CNN documentary following which contact was established with the restaurant chain which had branched out into North London, courtesy of a relative, the owner's daughter had graduated from a UK university and was based in North London at the time of the study. In relation to *Mama Cass*, it is worth pointing out that contact had been longstanding and ongoing since 2009 with a profiling of the London branch having been undertaken in 2010 after an in-depth interview with a family member who runs the London branch or offshoot (see Madichie, 2010a). In the second case, this was another incidental opportunity much of which is owed to an April 2011 visit to Ghana by one of the researchers and the personal observation of the business practices of *Auntie Muni* in the Cantoments suburbs of Accra, Ghana. The actual interview with *Auntie Muni* lasted about half an hour and took place at the peak of business; hence the posture was primarily unstructured as she moved back and forth to attend to customer queries. Furthermore, the

interview was conducted in Twi (a leading local Ghanaian) and had to be translated into English language.⁴

Indeed one of the authors' encounter with Auntie Muni was as far back as in April of 2010 (during the Easter holidays) where he opted to experience the trend of an informal local, close-to-nature dining rather than a five-star hotel breakfast that tended to underlie festivities such as Easter. Following that particular experience and participant observation, contact was made to interview the owner, Auntie Muni, a couple of years later in 2012. While *Mama Cass* has been featured on CNN, *Auntie Muni* has gotten coverage in the local press like Ghana's leading newspaper, the Daily Graphic and the www.timeout.com website notes that although it is practically a roadside bar, Auntie Muni has earned a formidable reputation in Accra for *Waakye*.⁵ In the next section the cases are analyzed in order of the in-depth interviews undertaken between October 2010 and September 2012. A key rationale for the comparative study of WBOs in West Africa is based on three observed similarities: (i) Both countries have some commonalities in the struggle for, and attainment of Independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Ghana in 1957, and Nigeria in 1960); (ii) Both WBOs are indigenous and in the same line of business - i.e. the restaurant business; and

⁴ **Twi** (specifically Ashanti Twi) is a language spoken in Ghana by about 7 million people. It is one of the three dialects of the Akan language, the others being Akuapem Twi and Fante Twi. Within Ghana, Twi is spoken in the Ashanti Region and in parts of the Eastern, Western, Central, Volta and Brong Ahafo Region. Ashanti Twi is the most widely spoken of the dialects of the Akan language. Akan is spoken by about 44 percent of Ghana's population as a first language, and is also used as a second language by a large number of the remainder. See http://www.africaforthafricans.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=94:ghana-language-twi-translation-&catid=49:ghana-july-2011&Itemid=76

⁵ *Waakye* is a very popular Ghanaian food often eaten as breakfast or lunch, and sold by vendors on the streets of big and small cities alike in Ghana. It is made by boiling rice and beans together. The waakye meal also includes tomatoes, chilli pepper, fish, prawns, meat and other spicy ingredients. It has been hailed by the United Nations as a combination that can help stamp out malnutrition from the world! Waakye is rich in protein, essential vitamins, magnesium, and other micronutrients for a healthy lifestyle. It is also a low fat meal, provided too much oil is not included during preparation. Like any other food, if prepared in a clean environment and eaten within minutes or a few hours of preparation, it will remain a healthy choice in terms of bacterial contamination.

(iii) Research on WBO in both countries are reasonably well reported in the literature but hardly in the sectors covered herein.

3. Country Profiles

Both Nigeria and Ghana have a shared history (see table 1 for comparative data) having both gained independence within three years of each other, produced Elder Statesmen (Nnamdi Azikiwe in the case of Nigeria; Kwame Nkrumah in the case of Ghana) and are both Anglophone countries.

Table 1. Comparative Economic Data

Country	Nigeria	Ghana
Capital	Abuja	Accra (executive capital)
Population	162.4 million (UN, 2011)	25 million (UN, 2011)
Area	923,768 sq km (356,669 sq miles)	238,533 sq km (92,098 sq miles)
GNI per capita	US \$1,200 (World Bank, 2011)	US \$1,410 (World Bank, 2011)
Main exports	Petroleum, petroleum products, cocoa, rubber	Gold, cocoa, timber, tuna, bauxite, aluminium, manganese ore, diamonds
Major languages	English (official), Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa	English, African languages including Akan, Ewe
Major religion	Islam, Christianity, indigenous beliefs	Christianity, indigenous beliefs, Islam
Life expectancy (United Nations)	52 years (men), 53 years (women)	64 years (men), 66 years (women)

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13433790>

Starting with Nigeria, the growing attention given to entrepreneurial ventures in that country reflects the potential contributions of such activities to employment opportunities in the economy (Alarape, 2009; Singh *et al*, 2011). Entrepreneurs have contributed significantly to the growth of SMEs which now comprise 66-87% all operating firms (NBS,

2004; UNIDO, 2001), one-third of GDP and as much as 90% of new jobs in Nigeria (OECD, 2005). Women's contribution to this sector, particularly within the informal economy, has been well recognised (Alarape, 2009; Woldie and Adersua, 2004). This has resulted in government initiatives to encourage female entrepreneurs (e.g. better life programme). There however continues to be a lack of understanding of the factors that may underpin the decision by women to start their business in Nigeria. Although WBOs are both an important part of the Nigerian economy and largely hidden within the informal sector (Aderemi *et al.*, 2008), they remain under-researched (Singh *et al.*, 2011; Madichie, 2010b, 2011; Halkias *et al.*, 2011).

Singh *et al.* (2011: 205) in particular, point out that, the growing interest in entrepreneurialism in developing countries reflects mostly the potential contributions of such activities to employment opportunities in the economy. In oil-rich Nigeria with a population of about 148 million, these activities underpin an extensive informal economy, estimated to be worth US\$42 billion (Whittington, 2001). The informal sector includes organisations with such characteristics as low capital, ease of entry and preponderance of family ownership (Kitching and Woldie, 2004). Within this sector, where a large number of female entrepreneurs are perhaps not surprisingly located, they outnumber their male counterparts (Aderemi *et al.*, 2008). While literature on the role of Nigerian women in economic activities is suggestive of female suppression and gender discrimination, evidence does not always support this view in Nigeria (Mba, 1982; Woldie and Adersua, 2004; Madichie, 2009).

Indeed the phenomenon of Nigerian women owning their own business dates back to pre and post-colonial periods (Faseke, 1994, 2001; Aderemi *et al.*, 2008; Madichie, 2010b,

2011). During this period, women were predominantly involved in commercial activities such as wholesale and retail trading, weaving, fishing, food processing and agricultural production (Aderemi *et al.*, 2008). This trend was further intensified by the post-colonial economic decline, the lack of access to formal education and a male-dominated labour market (Fapohunda, 1976, 1983; Faseke, 1994, 2001) based on traditional notions of the male as breadwinner and family provider and the socialisation of girls into domesticity. These stereotypes have contributed to women becoming less visible in the formal economy (Woldie and Adersua, 2004) and may well explain their location within the informal sector.

In the last decade, the Nigerian industrial sector has come to be dominated by small-scale enterprises which constitute 66% of industrial establishments (UNIDO, 2001). Despite this growth, women entrepreneurial activities in Nigeria have often been set back by high rates of business failures, low productivity, a general lack of sustained government policies and implementation, access to micro credit and micro capital (Dionco-Adetayo *et al.*, 2005). For example, in order to encourage female entrepreneurs, the Nigerian Government in 1987 introduced BLP and family support programme. These programmes were partly aimed at encouraging female entrepreneurs. However, Dionco-Adetayo *et al.* (2005) concluded that these programmes largely failed to deliver the benefits promised and they were not sustained by recent Nigerian Governments. From the discussion thus far, we can see that women constitute a significant component of entrepreneurial activities in Nigeria, with potential to make a strong contribution to the economic activities of the region.

In the case of Ghana, the development of WBOs is not very well reported in the literature. However, two key papers (Buame, 2000; Dzisi, 2008) that are nearly a decade apart

provide some insight into how the subject has evolved recently. As Buame (2000) once pointed out, women in Ghana especially held unto indigenous entrepreneurial activities. Traditionally, women in Ghana are expected to function mainly within the domestic household unit, mothering and nursing children, cooking, processing and storing food, and managing available resources to sustain family members. Indigenous women in Ghana participate in agricultural work, farming different crops and market produce, either on their own or jointly with their husbands or kin. Some of them also make pottery, weave cloth and engage in other handicrafts depending on the resources available locally. In every Ghanaian society, there has been an increase in the numbers of indigenous Ghanaian women entering into business and these women are contributing economically to the wellbeing of their families and the development of Ghana.

According to Dzisi (2008: 258), Ghana's population of about 20 million is a mosaic of ethnic diversity. While the official language of Ghana is English, approximately 75 languages and dialects are actually spoken, each associated with a different ethnic group. The major ethnic groups in Ghana include the Akan, Ewe, Mole-Dagbane, Guan, and Ga-Adangbe. The subdivisions of each group share a common cultural heritage, history, language, and origin. This is to the extent that she opined that "*no part of Ghana, however, is ethnically homogeneous.*" Rural or indigenous communities, with the exception of cocoa-producing areas that have attracted migrant labor, tend to reflect more indigenous population distributions. In spite of the various ethnic groups in Ghana with corresponding subcultures, Ghana may be described as an indigenous nation characterized by a definite geographical territory, which a group of people identify themselves with; a comprehensive culture, similar in expression, and a framework

of expectations as a collectivity; a network of ethnic interdependence; a common political system; and a common economic system of production and distribution (Buame, 2000).

4. Discussion of the Cases

Despite these similarities, however, the Ghanaian case is more informal than the Nigerian case – the latter being more formalized, and very well established. Indeed the investigation of *Auntie Muni* was just as incidental having been prompted by a trip to Accra where one of the researchers patronizing first time customer was intrigued by the popularity of, and demand for the product – i.e. *waakye*. In the following sections the study compares both cases, using a standardized research protocol that was not *a priori* defined. Although in-depth interviews were used in both cases, the selection of the cases was purely by chance. However, this does not, in any way negate the credibility of the study as the initial tool used in the first interview was replicated, with only slight modifications, for use in the second case (i.e. Auntie Muni).

4.1 Analyses/ Summary of Cases

In this section, the study highlights the profiles of the WBOs (including their starting-up motivations), and challenges (including access to finance, skills development, management challenges, problem of visibility, and future plans).

4.1.1 Owner Profiles

Mama Cass was founded in 1983 by Mrs. Onabowale, granted its trademark in 1994, and subsequently commenced operation of cafeterias soon afterwards. Its first self-service cafeteria established in 2000 was in the prestigious neighbourhood of

Allen Avenue (located in Ikeja, Lagos in the south-western part of Nigeria), with Victoria Island (also in Lagos) commencing operations in 2002. In the same year also, the first outlet was opened in Wuse, Abuja (the federal capital of Nigeria) with the Okada, Edo State (in the mid-west of the country) branch commencing operations a year later in 2003. Three years later in 2006, another outlet was opened in Abeokuta (Ogun State in western Nigeria and home of the past President Obasanjo), followed by yet another opening in 2007 with the launch of the Oko Oba outlet. Mama Cass Restaurants (Nigeria) Ltd has numerous branches all over the country and even opened an associate branch in North London in 2008 (see Madichie, 2012).

Auntie Muni, in the second case, hails from the Dagomba tribe (in Tamale) in the Northern Region of Ghana. Her education was up to the middle school level in the northern region before she moved to Accra about twenty years ago (she turned 60 in June 2012). She now has three children having lost one a few years ago. *Auntie Muni* used to live in Osu, about 10 minutes away from her workplace. She started with her auntie whom she came to live with as she moved to Accra, but later took over fully after a couple of weeks (see Madichie and Hinson, 2013). While her auntie assisted with much needed financial capital at the beginning of the business, it was at the urging of her customers that she moved out closer to the road side – the latter point is instructive and a point we would return to in our discussions.

4.1.2 Starting Up Motivation

In the first case, Mama Cass is one of the major players in the Nigerian ‘fast food’ market. In addition to its core business (cafeterias that serve traditional Nigerian food) it has

developed services such as outside catering services (e.g. contract catering and pastry supplies) to complement the local dishes served in its numerous cafeterias. The Company's Head Office is situated at Plot 6, Lateef Dosunmu Street, Agindigbi, Ikeja, Lagos. It also operates in Abuja and other states. Mama Cass has three core product lines: *Self-service cafeterias*, which is the core business of the company – provision of traditional Nigerian dishes in a style of “*home cooking served fast*”. Additional products sold in the cafeterias include salads, drinks and pastries. All cafeterias offer a takeout service as well as a dine-in service. The sales split for takeout can range from 25% to 50% depending on location and markets. *Outdoor catering services* provide a broader range of menus, with services being available to companies and individuals on a single event basis or as a longer term contract as industrial catering for staff canteens of these businesses. *Mobile sales units* have the opportunity of being developed as an independent product line - sending out mobile sales units (mobile shops/tricycle vans) into the local community.

Auntie Muni is not the conventional eatery. It is largely informal catering to a diverse range of clientele. The outfit thrives on its popularity of the founder and CEO, Auntie Muni, known to most as Emma (mum). Auntie Muni has 12 employees; seven of them are non-family members. For Auntie Muni, the motivations for starting up, were purely accidental:

Someone started the Waakye business and stopped and asked me to continue. I came into this business mainly to help me take care of my children to go far in life. It was a good opportunity for me and I took advantage of that. My main product is the Waakye (brown rice and beans). I tried the white rice for about three months but did not sell well. The customers complained that they eat white rice in their homes and therefore did not patronize the food.

Furthermore, Auntie Muni has no clear or specified target market, as she constantly opines, “my target is everyone.” The undifferentiated marketing strategy adopted by Auntie Muni is also evident in her comments:

Whoever is ready to buy is welcome. I want to attract everybody hence my decision to operate only on weekends. The workers and everyone is at home on the weekends and therefore can patronize my food.

Auntie Muni thrives on simplicity and that could be seen as one of its unique selling points:

I live in a simple community. Though Osu is considered a high class community, my area is a very simple suburb, we are not with the high class. I moved out of the home operation to the road side which was given to me by a landlord who later ejected me. Some taxi drivers who were operating from the current location accommodated me when they heard about my eviction from my former location.

Simplicity, however, comes at a price, especially as other challenges emerge – ranging from the usual suspect (finance); to a range of others including skills development, management, visibility and future growth plans (see Madichie, 2010a; Madichie and Hinson, 2014).

4.1.3 Access to finance

When it comes to the issue of finance, both cases seem to converge on the position that this poses a great challenge. Even though the cases may be hard to generalize, there are clear indications that access to finance did present a major handicap that could also impact on the many other challenges such as adequate skills development as well as promotional strategies (i.e. visibility) of the ventures. In the case of *Mama Cass*, from inside information available to the authors, is not immune to raising funds from expansion. Although

information on the initial start-up capital was not immediately known, one thing that is known is that the restaurant chain was in the process of going for an Initial Public Offering (i.e. IPO) trying to raise from the public in the form of shares. In the case of Auntie Muni, finance has had an impact on the business in several ways:

[...] people use to patronize the Waakye a lot but now, things are different. It was challenging at the beginning of the business in terms of money. When I started, I did not have enough money, so I spoke with those who supplied me with things like beans, oil, rice, meat, fish and the like to sell to me on credit. They agreed to supply me on credit and I had to honour my promise. You know, my business is only on Saturdays and Sundays, so after sales over the weekend, I go to them on Monday morning to settle my debts. I did this for a period of time before I could buy on a cash basis and this has helped me to expand. I started operating from the house and now I am here [Auntie Muni]
My relationship with my suppliers was built on trust and therefore they could sell to me on credit without fear. There was this man who could give me up 30 bags of rice and 30 bags of beans on credit for me to pay back monthly [Auntie Muni].

Auntie Muni indicated that the issue of funding was challenging in the beginning. Even though the worst seems to be over at present, the money matter has not completely gone away as she still seeks funds to further formalize the business. Top of her list seems to be having a proper business address in a location that would be most promising for establishing longevity and sustainability of the business.

4.1.4 Skills Development and Management challenges

Most small firms are usually confronted with management challenges largely due to the fact that they tended to rely exclusively on family members as their management team. This phenomenon however seems to be starting to wane in unexpected areas such as microenterprises and small

businesses. Indeed Chirico (2008) highlighted the utility of looking outside for productive manpower in the context of family businesses. According to him, knowledge could be acquired by employing and/ or using non family members in the operations of firms. On its part, *Mama Cass*, while it seems reasonably well-staffed going by the number of graduates in its workforce was no overt mention of skills development. However, one interesting observation in the Auntie Muni business was that half of her staff were non-family members, which in itself is suggestive that employment had to do more with demonstrable cooking skills than familial ties. The following quotes sum-up some of the observed challenges:

Mama Cass thrives on the slogan, “*Building Food Brands that uphold our Traditional Heritage.*” *Mama Cass* associates itself with four watchwords – Tradition, Heritage, Community and Value. **While its vision is** to continuously add value to lives by nourishing communities through home cooked traditional meals that exceed expectations, its **overriding mission** is to “uphold our traditional heritage and values by serving home cooked meals fast in a clean and friendly environment.” [**Mama Cass**].

My relationship with my employees, and suppliers alike, was built on trust and, therefore, they (the latter) could sell to me on credit without fear. There was this man who could give me up 30 bags of rice and 30 bags of beans on credit for me to pay back monthly. [Auntie Muni].

She also has or had some staffing issues:

[...] it was difficult at the beginning, as I was the only one doing everything; going to the market, cooking the food and everything. It was tiring until I brought in some sisters from Tamale to help. In terms of my staff [I must admit] it was difficult at the beginning, as I was the only one doing everything; going to the market, cooking the food and everything. It was tiring until I brought in some sisters [not necessarily family members] from Tamale to help. [Auntie Muni]

Auntie Muni has no clear or specified target market, as she put it:

My target is everyone [...] Whoever is ready to buy is welcome. I want to attract everybody hence my decision to operate only on weekends. The workers and everyone is at home on the weekends and therefore can patronize my food.

Arguably the WBO targets customers from every part of the city – to the extent that she highlights a special case of a customer who travelled all the way from Takoradi (a city which is about 230 km west of Accra) to patronize her Waakye. This has some implications for the visibility of the business as discussed in the next section.

4.1.5 *Visibility*

When it comes to the subject of *visibility*, Mama Cass merits the title of ‘new breed’ by virtue of having embarked upon the development of a high-level visibility profile – i.e. proactive marketing communications of its brand. To supplement Mama Cass’ marketing strategy, which strives to create a high quality image in order to influence the perception of potential customers, it has made major inroads into social networking sites such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *LinkedIn*. According to the manager at the London branch:

We are a modern company redefining the restaurant landscape. We have an elite workforce of graduates conversant with social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. We have also been featured on CNN – so we have a global presence! [Mama Cass]

I have not received any award from the government or any quarters, it is the name “Auntie Muni” that brings people. It is KSM (Kweku Sintim Missa, the host of “Thank God It’s Friday” a comedy show on Metro TV) who interviewed me. Citi FM also interviewed me. Those are the recognitions I have had aside the name. Hopefully we would benefit from the outcome of this interview [Auntie Muni]

Auntie Muni, does not seem to have enjoyed any kind of publicity save a few media interviews. According to her there

hasn't been any kind of awards or recognition, but just interviews. As she pointed out:

I have not received any award from the government or any quarters, it is the name "Auntie Muni" that brings people. It is KSM (Kweku Sintim Missa, the host of "Thank God it's Friday" a comedy show on Metro TV) who interviewed me. Citi FM also interviewed me. Those are the recognitions I have had aside the name.

Auntie Muni also leverages on the goodwill of her community and her engagement with that community, which also enhances her visibility through word-of-mouth (WOM). According to her:

In my community, everybody knows me and I live in peace with everyone [...] Everybody regards me as Emma (mum) and I respect everyone. All the boys in the community are my sons. I help other people to solve their problems and I try my best anytime I can help. If it is marital issues, I can sometimes intervene on behalf of a wife and talk to the husband even if I have to plead on her behalf. When there is a quarrel in the community, people sometimes come to me and I try my best to settle it. I respect everyone and I think others respect me in return. [Auntie Muni]

Mama Cass, on its part engages with its clientele virtually by leveraging on the power of social networking sites for a "tech-savvy" public.

4.1.6 Future growth plans

As documented in the literature, small and/ or informal businesses can either be content with their current size or seek to grow in the future. For example, when asked about her plans for the future, *Mama Cass*, has a lot going for it. The business enjoys a market leader position in Nigeria with over 25 years' experience. It has also become a household name in the country, as well as synonymous with 'quick service' and the 'fast food' concept. It nonetheless has its weaknesses –

notably, it is still grappling with blending its existing family-oriented status with the beer parlour (bar) appeal. Its main focus is food, with drinks mostly in the evenings and weekends (see Madichie, 2010a).

Nonetheless, both WBOs seem to have plans for future growth and development. While Mama Cass relies on its heritage and history as a bridge to the future, Auntie Muni has two key challenges – management and a permanent address:

We have over 25years experience and have become a household name in Nigeria and abroad. We are also considering going public with plans for an IPO (initial public offering) in the pipeline [Mama Cass]

I would want to expand because I have not finished taking care of my kids which is the main reason why I started this business. If I get a nice location, I will certainly open another branch. The main reason is getting a good location; I have been looking for a place but it is difficult to find. All I need is a good location, I will use my name “Auntie Muni” and people will patronize. When I get a good location, I could operate on week days instead of weekends as it is the case in the current location. When I am not there in the future, my children will continue the business. I even went to Italy for a medical treatment for a year and they were able to handle affairs; so they will continue if I am not there. They are capable of handling everything in my absence [Auntie Muni]

When the question future plans was posed (including expansion of the business, as well as family succession) both cases were notably considering such options. Mama Cass, on the one hand, is seeking an IPO, which is indicative of a planned growth and diversified ownership, which would guarantee the longevity of the business and help with its financial viability and sustainability. On the other hand, Auntie Muni has plans of expansion, as taking care of her kids, remains part of her unfinished business. In doing this, however, she hopes to secure “a nice location” in order to “*open another branch.*” She also makes it clear that one of her main challenges was “*finding a good location*”. Interestingly she

was also considering formalizing the trade name, “Auntie Muni,” which has made her popular amongst her patrons. Currently she operates mostly on weekends, but plans to extend her operations to weekdays – something she claims could be achieved only when and if she “gets a good location.” As she points out:

I moved out of the home operation to the road side which was given to me by a landlord who later ejected me. Some taxi drivers who were operating from the current location accommodated me when they heard about my eviction from my former location.

Ultimately despite the differences in the degree of formalization and size of operations both cases seem to converge on matters related to finance and further growth.

5. Discussion, Conclusions & Implications

The cases in this study provide some refreshing insight towards a better understanding of similarities and differences WBOs of various sizes and degrees of formality. Over the years, a number of studies have documented barriers to women’s advancement in the corporate world –including hotel management (see for example, Mooney and Ryan, 2009) – with the stereotyping and misperceptions about women’s abilities and long-term commitment to business careers. Among the usual suspects, irrespective of geographical or historical boundaries, include exclusion from informal networks and channels of communication; lack of willingness to “risk” putting women in key developmental positions especially line positions, pay inequalities and sexual harassment (Madichie, 2007, 2009, 2010a). These barriers have prompted many women into seeking alternative employment options – thus paving the reinvigorated interest in women entrepreneurship discourse (see Madichie 2011: 216).

In the cases presented in this study, while the findings would be hard to generalize across SSA, some areas for policy implications (and especially in the context of the role of women in changing the entrepreneurial landscape of SSA) may have emerged. First and foremost, both cases highlight two diametrically opposed ventures – on the one hand, *Auntie Muni* is still a single branch business without any formalized business name or address, whereas *Mama Cass*, on the other hand, is a market leader in the restaurant business with a well-established business name and address, multiple branch networks and in the process of acquiring an IPO. Indeed both cases have demonstrated some consistency with the observations made about Nigerian women (Madichie, 2011; 216) that: “...*the greatest challenge for Nigerian women in business is being taken seriously by their male counterparts, as well as by society in general.*”

There are also indications that women and success might have to be a zero-sum game where successful women would have to be failures in other departments. The contention here being that for WBOs to succeed as much as their male counterparts, the WBOs must either be single or have adult children (see Madichie, 2011). Overall, the study is similar to Chirico (2008), by unpacking the business owner’s background (nationality, ethnicity, education, family etc.); prior motivations (why they chose to start-up); challenges (including start-up capital, government regulations, personal achievements, and plans for the future. Finally, while the cases in this study are based on insights from SSA, the topic remains a contentious one in most parts of the world from Ghana (Dzisi, 2008); through Jordan (Dajani and Marlow, 2012); Pakistan (Roomi, 2013); Uganda (Madichie and Katwalo, 2008); to the United Kingdom (Marlow, 2013); and the United Arab Emirates

(Madichie and Gallant, 2012) amongst others – where comparative studies might be explored in future research.

References

- Aderemi, H.O., Ilori, M.O., Siyanbola, W.O., Adegbite, S.A. and Abereijo, I.O. (2008) An assessment of the choice and performance of women entrepreneurs in technological and non-technological enterprises in south-western Nigeria, *African Journal of Business Management*, 2(10), 165-76.
- Alarape, A. (2009) On the road to institutionalizing entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities, *International Journal of Management Education*, 7(2), 81-6.
- Al-Dajani, H. and Marlow, S. (2012) *Empowerment through entrepreneurship*. In McAdam, M. (Ed.), *Female Entrepreneurship*, Routledge, London.
- BBC Country Profile for Ghana, online at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13433790>
- Buame, S. (2000), *Advanced Entrepreneurship: Enterprise Culture, Venture Creation, Promotion & Management of SMEs in Ghana*, University of Ghana Press, Accra.
- Chirico, F. (2008) Knowledge Accumulation in Family Firms: Evidence from Four Case Studies. *International Small Business Journal*, 26(4), 433-462.
- Dionco-Adetayo, E.A., Makinde, J.T. and Adetayo, J.O. (2005) Evaluation of policy implementation in women entrepreneurship development. Retrieved from: <http://sbaer.uca.edu/research/icsb/2005/author.pdf> (accessed 9 September 2009).
- Dzisi, S. (2008) Entrepreneurial activities of indigenous African women: a case of Ghana, *Journal of Enterprising*

- Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, Vol. 2, Issue 3, pp. 254 - 264
- Economist, The* (25 February 2012) Business in Rwanda: Africa's Singapore? A country with a bloody history seeks prosperity by becoming business-friendly. Available online at: <http://www.economist.com/node/21548263> [Accessed 18 March 2012]
- Fapohunda, E. (1976), *Urban Women's Labour Force Participation Rate Patterns in Nigeria*, Mimeo, University of Lagos, Nigeria.
- Faseke, M. (2001), *The Nigerian Woman: Her Economic and Socio-Political Status in Time Perspective*, Agape Publications, Ibadan.
- Faseke, M. (1994) "Women in Badagry economy 1800-1900." In Ogunremi, G., Opeloye, M. and Oyewero, S. (Eds.), *Badagry: A Study in History, Culture and Tradition of an Ancient City*, Rex Charles Publication, Ibadan, p. 157.
- Halkias, D., Thurman, P., Harkiolakis, N., and Caracatsanis, S. (2011) (Eds.) *Female Immigrant Entrepreneurs: The Economic and Social Impact of a Global Phenomenon*. Surrey, England: Gower.
- Kitching, B.M. and Woldie, A. (2004) *Female entrepreneurs in transitional economics: a comparative study of businesswomen in Nigeria and China*, Proceedings of Hawaii International Conference on Business, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA.
- Madichie, N. (2015a) *Heaven Kigali – Knocking on Heaven's Door? Full length Case Study*. In Douglas West, John Ford, and Essam Ibrahim. *Strategic Marketing: Creating Competitive Advantage*. Third Edition, pp. 533-540.
- Madichie, N. (2015b) "Heaven Kigali - - Narratives & Realities of an "Ethnic Minority" Woman Business Owner." Paper presented at the 38th Institute for Small Business &

- Entrepreneurship (ISBE) Conference, Glasgow, November 10-13.
- Madichie, N. (2011) Setting an agenda for women entrepreneurship in Nigeria: A commentary on Faseke's journey through time for "The Nigerian Woman" *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 26(3), 212 – 219.
- Madichie, N. (2010a) Putting Melville on the world stage – Let's hear it from Lize Kruger, CEO of Life on 3rd, Enterprising Matters. Official magazine of the Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Online at: <http://www.isbe.org.uk/lifeonthird>
- Madichie, N. (2010b) "A Tribute to Modupeolu Faseke's 'The Nigerian Woman.'" In Falola, T., and Fwatshak, S. U. (Eds.) *Beyond Tradition: African Women and Cultural Spaces*. (Chapter 13), pp. 179-188.
- Madichie, N. (2009) Breaking the Glass Ceiling in Nigeria: A Review of Women Entrepreneurship. *Journal of African Business*, 10(1), 51-66.
- Madichie, N. (2007) 'Nigerian restaurants in London: bridging the experiential perception/ expectation gap', *International Journal of Business and Globalization*, 1(2), 258–271.
- Madichie, N., and Gallant, M. (2012) Broken Silence: A commentary on Women's entrepreneurship in the United Arab Emirates. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship & Innovation*, 13(2), 81-92.
- Madichie, N., and Hinson, R. E. (2014). Women entrepreneurship in sub-Saharan Africa. In S. Nwankwo, and K. Ibeh, *The Routledge Companion to Business in Africa* (pp. 179-197)
- Madichie, N., and Katwalo, A. (2008) Entrepreneurial and cultural dynamics: a gender kaleidoscope of Ugandan Microenterprise. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*. Vol. 5, No. 3/ 4, pp. 337-348.

- Mama Cass (2008) the *Private Placement* Memorandum of 17th August 2008.
- Mba, N.E. (1982) *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1960-1965*, University of California, Berkeley, CA.
- Mensah, K. (*Al-Jazeera*, 24 August 2014) Ghana's talented but ignored inventors. Retrieved from: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/08/ghana-talented-but-ignored-inventors-2014823191921173432.html>
- Mooney, S., and Ryan, I. (2009) A woman's place in hotel management: upstairs or downstairs? *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 24(3), 195-210.
- NBS (2004) *Economic Survey of SMEs in Nigeria*. Abuja: National Bureau of Statistics.
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2005) *Financing SMEs in Africa*. African Economic Outlook 2004/2005. Policy Insights No. 7. Paris: OECD
- Roomi, M. A. (2013). Entrepreneurial capital, social values and Islamic traditions: Exploring the growth of women-owned enterprises in Pakistan. *International Small Business Journal*, 31(2), 175-191.
- Singh, S., Simpson, R., Mordi, C., and Okafor, C. (2011) Motivation to become an entrepreneur: a study of Nigerian women's decisions, *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies*, 2(2), 202 – 219.
- United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) (2001). *Women entrepreneurship development in selected African countries*. Working Paper No. 7. Vienna: United Nations Industrial Development Organisation.
- Vanguard, The Nigerian* (22 March 2014) From Spare Parts Trader to Motor Giant: The story of Innoson. Retrieved:

<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/03/spare-parts-trader-motor-giant-story-innoson>

Whittington, J. (2001) Nigeria fuelled by black economy. Retrieved 6 June 2010 from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/1689165.stm>

Woldie, A. and Adersua, A. (2004) Female entrepreneurs in a transitional economy, *International Journal of Social Economics*, 31(1), 78-93.