



## Understanding women's performance of entrepreneurship in the Sri Lankan context

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The aim of this study is to explore how women in Sri Lanka cultivate entrepreneurial personae to navigate the various gendered roles they situationally enact, as they attempt to secure legitimacy and acceptance, and overcome their otherness. Drawing on Goffman's theorisation of symbolic interaction, this study investigates how gender informs the performance of entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka. In this way, our study engages with the challenges women in the Global South navigate while undertaking entrepreneurship, and it contributes to the critical entrepreneurship literature on the intertwined nature of gender and entrepreneurship.

**Methodology:** Following Feminist Standpoint Epistemology (FSE), our qualitative study focuses on women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka by examining the performance of entrepreneurship through 44 Life History Interviews (LHIs) and 40 Field Observations conducted over a seven-month period.

**Findings:** The findings reveal that women carefully cultivate entrepreneurial personae by striking a balance between entrepreneurial ideals and patriarchal social expectations around womanhood. Our findings present how the entrepreneurial personae are constructed by way of appearance, mannerism, and setting, which presents opportunities for future research to explore the dramaturgical aspect of gender and entrepreneurship.

**Originality:** This study contributes to the growing body of feminist research surrounding women entrepreneurs, by drawing on insights from the lived experiences of women entrepreneurs in the Global South. This study also expands Goffman's theorisation of audience segregation and shows that a subject's understanding of the audience shapes their personae. A further contribution of this research is how space becomes an extension of the personae at play.

**Key words:** *Gender, Feminist Standpoint Theory, Symbolic Interactionism, Performance, Sri Lanka.*

## Introduction

Conventional research tends to (re-)produce a masculine construction of entrepreneurship, devaluing women entrepreneurs, and their businesses (Ahl, 2006). Despite the growth of a more critical strand of scholarship (e.g., Tedmanson et al., 2012), essentialist assumptions involving differences between male and female entrepreneurs underpin much of the mainstream literature. Continually assessed against male-centred standards, women are often cast as under-performers, and they are marginalised and excluded for deviating from white, heterosexual male norms (Brush et al., 2009; Dean et al. 2017, Poggesi et al., 2016). Moreover, gender bias operates in conjunction with a strong undercurrent of ethnocentrism in shaping the study and praxis of entrepreneurship (Ogbor, 2000). The concerns and aspirations of women in the Global South are still largely neglected, with the consequence of limiting contextual diversity in current research (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2014). Against this challenging scholarly backdrop, calls for more sensitive, reflexive, and inclusive studies that explore the full dimensionality and range of women business owners' experiences are gaining increasing traction (Essers and Tedmanson, 2014).

Exploring women entrepreneurs' issues and experiences in developing country contexts is essential for expanding the extant theoretical and empirical understanding of gender and entrepreneurship. As women business owners in diverse localities encounter distinctive and varied sociocultural and institutional forces, research efforts situated in the under-studied regions of the world are particularly well-placed to offer unique insights that could deepen and broaden the literature (de Vita et al., 2014). Furthermore, the limited focus on non-western women entrepreneurs is insufficient in accounting for the complexities of how diverse women engage in entrepreneurship (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2014). Often such studies transpose Western gender-based understandings to explain women's entrepreneurship, rather than unpacking the nuanced meanings behind why women engage in entrepreneurship in the way that they do in the Global South. Yet, as Jaim (2021) highlights, in highly patriarchal developing country contexts, women's entrepreneurial choices and decisions take shape in intricately gendered contexts that require further academic scrutiny, if entrepreneurship scholarship is to advance further.

The patchy scholarship regarding non-western women entrepreneurs risks their exclusion from empirical and conceptual accounts, which can entail the homogenisation of research on women's entrepreneurship. In this light, our study, which focuses on the experiences of women

entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka, is a vital corrective step against the problematic overshadowing of women from the Global South in research. Sri Lanka is a particularly intriguing context for the study of gender and entrepreneurship, because it is a society marked by a high degree of identity contestation (Wickramasinghe, 2006). Patriarchy co-exists with modernisation, and traditional caste and religion dynamics endure alongside the post-independence realities of a new social class structure (Wimalasena, 2017). On the one hand, entrepreneurship is touted as a key solution to women's lower participation in the Sri Lankan labour market (Kodikara, 2018). On the other hand, having a career and maintaining respectability are socially regarded as mutually exclusive phenomena for women in Sri Lanka (Fernando and Cohen, 2014). Upper- and middle-class entrepreneurs are still predominantly men, and while there are relatively more women entrepreneurs in the lower income segment, entrepreneurship carries a high degree of stigma for women. In this light, Sri Lanka's contradictory societal landscape offers the ideal ground for adding further contextual nuance to gender and entrepreneurship by limning the heretofore less heard and less visible gendered entrepreneurial experiences from the Global South.

In this paper, we explore how women in Sri Lanka cultivate entrepreneurial personae to navigate the various gendered roles they situationally enact, as they attempt to secure legitimacy and acceptance, and overcome their otherness. Sri Lankan women are at once encouraged and tainted for the pursuit of entrepreneurship, yet our knowledge of how they improvise and strategise around gender to perform entrepreneurship is lacking. Thus, the research question undergirding our paper is: *How does gender inform women's performance of entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka?* To address this question, we deploy a theoretical frame, which utilises feminist standpoint theory and Goffman's symbolic interactionism. Following feminist standpoint theory, we contend that marginalised women have privileged insights into their disadvantaged position in the unequal gender power system (Harding, 1986; 1991), and the interlocking forms of oppression with other power structures (Hill Collins, 1990). We ally with the critical scholarship which posits that marginalised women's experiences and perspectives constitute a core source of knowledge for gender and entrepreneurship research (Essers and Benschop, 2007). For example, in their life story-based analysis of Turkish and Moroccan migrant women entrepreneurs' experiences in the Netherlands, Essers and Benschop (2007) show how enterprising women variously adhere to tropes of femininity or denounce such images or try and decouple femininity and entrepreneurship altogether depending on situational dynamics, based on deep knowledge revealed through women's histories. Crucially,

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3 we utilise feminist standpoint theory attentively, keeping in mind that women are not a  
4 monolith, and their experiences are multifarious, as calibrated by patriarchal societal context  
5 and the cultural particularities within which they are embedded in Sri Lanka. To orient our  
6 feminist theorising in a way that is sensitive to our setting, we utilise Goffman's theoretical  
7 concepts, noted for their foundational influence on feminist theorising (West, 1996). Indeed,  
8 critical breakthroughs in feminist theory, such as the notion of "gender as a routine  
9 accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction", can be traced back to Goffman's ideas  
10 (West and Zimmerman, 1987, 125). Indeed, Goffman's concepts have been utilised with  
11 notable success in gender and entrepreneurship, particularly when it comes to the performance  
12 of gendered entrepreneurial identities (Giazitzoglu and Down, 2017). For example, deploying  
13 a Goffmanian analysis of ten white, middle-class male entrepreneurs in the UK, Giazitzoglu  
14 and Down (2017) demonstrate how their participants perform masculinity amongst each other  
15 in ways that enhance their authority and legitimacy as entrepreneurs, revealing that men also  
16 need to perform gender roles in particular ways in the highly gendered world of  
17 entrepreneurship.

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30 The paper is organised as follows. We next offer a critical overview of women's  
31 entrepreneurship literature. We then explain our integrated use of feminist standpoint theory in  
32 conjunction with Goffman's theorisation of the *self*, which facilitates our exploration of  
33 women's performance of entrepreneurship. Subsequently, we delve into our research  
34 methodology, after which we present the findings. The discussion and concluding remarks  
35 comprise the final section.

### 40 41 **Gender and entrepreneurship: a critical overview**

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Women-owned ventures are often associated with small-scale entrepreneurial activities with low growth potential, often due to financial and institutional constraints (e.g., Roomi et al., 2009; Sharafizad and Coetzer, 2016; Shaw et al., 2009; Thompson et al., 2009). Furthermore, childcare and domestic responsibilities are considered compelling priorities for women, and the lower scale and growth of women-owned ventures tend to be explained through women's gender roles and obligations based on choice-based arguments (e.g., Duberley and Carrigan, 2013; Ekinsmyth, 2013). Whether women's entrepreneurship is understood based on gendered barriers or gendered choices, the underlying presumptions surrounding their businesses reproduce stereotypes that reduce women's enterprises and their entrepreneurial behaviours to

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3 oversimple narratives that do not do full justice to the complexity of their entrepreneurial  
4 experiences.  
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7 In choice-based arguments, women's venture scale and type can seem to reflect their  
8 unique preferences based on their particular lifecycle stage, such as motherhood (Morris et al.,  
9 2006). Yet, women can also choose to undertake smaller capital investments and run businesses  
10 with lower growth potential in comparison to men due to their differential expectations of  
11 success in a marketplace set up against them, underlying the constrained nature of women's  
12 choices. In an exclusionary market context, women may come to expect more successful  
13 performance outcomes in lower growth industries that do not tend to be typical candidates for  
14 financing (Sullivan and Meek, 2012). Indeed, adopting a feminist lens, Huq et al. (2020) find  
15 that women entrepreneurs chart a growth path at a pace that takes account of their personal and  
16 social context, consciously utilising attributes and values culturally marked as feminine to  
17 shape their own strategic growth paths. Thus, conventional economic reasoning or established  
18 success measures may not be entirely useful in assessing women's entrepreneurial journeys.  
19 Measuring success through the lens of externally observable attributes based on economic  
20 formulas can fail to account for what may constitute success for women entrepreneurs  
21 themselves. Explanations of women's entrepreneurial activities are further complicated by the  
22 sense that second-generation women entrepreneurs may exhibit subtler differences in terms of  
23 entrepreneurial motivation and mindset (e.g., Li et al., 2020; Ejupi-Ibrahimi et al., 2020) as  
24 well as the impact of potentially wider and more established personal networks on the growth  
25 aspirations of their businesses (e.g., Mitra and Basit, 2021). Indeed, second-generation women  
26 entrepreneurs appear to be relatively more *voluntary entrepreneurs* (Rauf and Mitra, 2016),  
27 experiencing more pronounced pull factors, often in the context of their own intergenerational  
28 family businesses. Yet even then women's entrepreneurial pursuits are shown to be loaded by  
29 the continuing salience of the interconnections between gender and culture (Mitra and Basit,  
30 2021). Indeed, research shows that taking over the reins of established family businesses is no  
31 guarantee of emancipation or empowerment for women entrepreneurs, particularly in  
32 patriarchal country contexts (Boateng, 2021). Further extant literature shows us that when  
33 women entrepreneurs are studied, there are underlying presumptions of industries women are  
34 expected to pursue entrepreneurship in. While scholars such as, Ojediran et al. (2022), Nguyen  
35 et al. (2021), Jaafar et al. (2014), and Tan (2008) have examined women entrepreneurs in male  
36 dominated industries, there is a significant inclination in entrepreneurship literature to consider  
37 more inherently *feminine* industries when women are studied within this role.  
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3 Over the past decades, the literature on women entrepreneurs has developed substantially  
4 (Poggesi et al., 2016). As can be gleaned from the foregoing review, the push-pull effects  
5 surrounding entrepreneurial motivation, limited access to finance, venture growth issues, and  
6 the viability and strength of entrepreneurial networks continue to appear as important features  
7 of debates on women's entrepreneurship. The proliferation of research on women's  
8 entrepreneurship is highly welcome insofar as its capacity to start moving entrepreneurship  
9 away from its implicit but powerful associations with men. As Marlow and McAdam (2013)  
10 suggest, the treatment of women business owners in mainstream works has been highly  
11 problematic, as they have come to be positioned either overtly or covertly as underperformers,  
12 without due attention to their unique aims, concerns, and challenges. For example, in her  
13 pathbreaking work that reviewed the entrepreneurship literature through the lens of discursive  
14 analysis, Ahl (2006) not only gives troubling examples of bias from foundational texts in the  
15 early evolution of entrepreneurship in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also suggests modern classics  
16 such as Shane and Venkataraman (2000) to point out the continuance of bias, even if in more  
17 implicit ways, in our most celebrated scholarly texts.  
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30 As well, a key criticism of the traditional entrepreneurship literature is its underlying  
31 heterosexual, western, white male bias that 'others' individuals who do not conform to these  
32 archetypes of normality (Essers and Benschop, 2007; Rumens and Ozturk, 2019). When  
33 women have been studied, heterosexual, western, white, middle-class women's experience has  
34 been foregrounded, placing non-western women and women from emerging economies as  
35 outsiders. For example, Pio (2007) argues that non-western women entrepreneurs are  
36 positioned in the periphery of the business world, and their operations on the margins may  
37 influence the degree of acceptance they command as rightful business owners equal in calibre  
38 and consequence to their western counterparts. Yet, when women's entrepreneurship is at the  
39 heart of not only the growth potential of emerging economies, but often also the progress  
40 toward gender equality, indicating the robust significance and scope of their business  
41 endeavours societally (Torri and Martinez, 2014). Such insights motivate us to unpack  
42 women's lived experiences regarding how they perform entrepreneurship as business owners  
43 who operate at the confluence of myriad sociocultural forces within which non-western women  
44 are embedded.  
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56 As the focus of this paper is to unpack women's performance of entrepreneurship and  
57 construction of entrepreneurial personae as a lived experience, we use Goffman's theory which  
58 focuses on the interactive dimension of social practice. Goffman however recognises that the  
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3 boundaries of social interaction are shaped by sociocultural forces that inform the construction  
4 of the personae. Goffman, (1956) argues that the practice of impression management transpires  
5 when personal presentation consciously adheres to preconceived social norms. Unsurprisingly,  
6 impression management, its nature, success and consequences are gendered. In their  
7 authoritative review of the literature on impression management, Guadagno and Cialdini  
8 (2007) note strong gender differences in impression management behaviours. In particular,  
9 men tend to display assertiveness, and women manage impressions by focusing on supplicating  
10 their audiences, in line with gender role expectations. According to Guadagno and Cialdini  
11 (2007), when women attempt to be assertive, they are penalised for gender-discordant  
12 behaviour, but when they undertake supplicative behaviours, they also fail to get dividends, as  
13 supplication is undervalued in the business world, creating a double bind that is hard to surpass  
14 for women. To be sure, impression management is complex, and can be accepted or rejected,  
15 when men perform entrepreneurial personae as well (Giazitzoglu and Down, 2017). Yet,  
16 entrepreneurial impression management for women is potentially even more conflictual, if  
17 performances emphasising masculinity and femininity can both be castigated based on shifting  
18 rationales. Thompson-Whiteside et al. (2018) indicate that women often negotiate significant  
19 dilemmas around impression management, as self-promotion still features as a natural, and  
20 understandable, part of male bravado in business culture, while it is viewed as an aberration in  
21 the case of women who business audiences expect should behave less brashly, and in a  
22 relatively more modest and contained way. Strikingly, much of the empirical work in the  
23 impression management literature involving gender and entrepreneurship comes from the  
24 West, and empirically the Global South has received much less attention, although highly  
25 conservative business attitudes towards women continue to propagate in highly patriarchal  
26 social orders in parts of these neglected regions of the world.

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29 The effects of gender roles and gendered preconceptions that operate as informal institutions  
30 are well-recognised as a significant constraint upon women entrepreneurs (Brush et al., 2009).  
31 Feminist scholars identify differences in the assessment of women vs. men entrepreneurs,  
32 where dominant notions about gender shape judgments about entrepreneurial roles and efforts  
33 (Bruni et al., 2004; Dean et al., 2017). However, research also shows that women entrepreneurs  
34 can prise out opportunities by using their gender role identities as a strategic resource (Leung,  
35 2011). Women entrepreneurs can draw on their longstanding experiences with gender  
36 preconceptions and accumulated knowledge about how to fulfil gender role requirements to  
37 negotiate sexism and counter the negative impact of a highly masculinised business setting.  
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3 While gender beliefs have a potent influence on the particular social protocols to be followed  
4 in a business exchange (Cowden, Creek, and Maurer, 2021), women can alternately  
5 accommodate or resist gender scripts and expectations through varying strategic behaviours  
6 (Bianco, Lombe, and Bolis, 2017). Yet, nuanced knowledge regarding how women perform  
7 entrepreneurship in accordance with contextual circumstances is still lacking, particularly as  
8 regards women in non-Western settings. The welcome expansion of the gender and  
9 entrepreneurship literature in studies focused on non-Western contexts offer insights into the  
10 complexities of how women engage in entrepreneurship, and the deep-rooted influence of  
11 formal institutional structures and informal social practices in shaping women's  
12 entrepreneurship (e.g., Adikaram and Razik, 2022; Jaim, 2021; Simarasl et al., 2022a; Simarasl  
13 et al., 2022b). In our work, we ally with such studies to understand how women perform  
14 entrepreneurship in a context so heavily marked by patriarchal subordination. How  
15 marginalised women, or women from cultural environments that are vastly different to that of  
16 western women, perform entrepreneurship may reveal the diversity of gendered  
17 entrepreneurship performances yet to be fully explored in the literature.  
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## 32 **Theoretical backdrop**

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35 Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST) advances the primacy of women's experience and  
36 perspective as the basis of knowledge in understanding the marginalisation of women (Harding,  
37 1986; 1991). A key tenet of FST is epistemic advantage, which is that women are best placed  
38 to gauge the quality of knowledge produced about their concerns, because not only are they  
39 deeply familiar with the conditions of their own disadvantage, but they also understand  
40 intimately the social conditions through which the dominance of men over women is  
41 maintained (Wylie, 2003). The other key tenet of FST is situated knowledge, which holds that  
42 knowledge claims are conditioned by the location of the knower in a specific social context  
43 (Hartsock, 1989). In this study, our theoretical focus is fully amenable to these two principles.  
44 We deploy Goffman's (1956; 1957) sociological notions - in particular, projected image,  
45 understanding of the audience, creating a persona, managing roles and extending the persona  
46 through space - in order to conceptually orient our analysis and interrogate our data in a context-  
47 sensitive way.  
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58 Goffman's work on symbolic interaction highlights how social actors' demeanours inform the  
59 audience of their positioning in the interaction (Goffman, 1956; 1967). Goffman views  
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3 people's positions in stratified contexts as key to what behaviours they can undertake,  
4 considering demeanour a reflection of their status. As social actors attempt to manage their  
5 position vis-à-vis those in positions of relative authority, they mould and project their image  
6 consciously to make favourable impressions. Goffman (1956) describes social interaction as a  
7 dramaturgical performance or enactment, where the performance is tailored by understanding  
8 and responding to the audience's expectations. The specific context of social interaction  
9 presents the social etiquette and protocol that has been normalised over time. Thus, social  
10 actors craft personae to abide by the etiquette and protocol in order to display context-  
11 appropriate behaviours. The inability to comply with audience expectations can harm one's  
12 social status and legitimacy.

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21 In Goffman's (1959) theorisation, four attributes are utilised to achieve any performance:  
22 setting, appearance, manner, and regions, together which comprise the *front*. For Goffman,  
23 speech, the body, and the space are creatively utilised by social actors to undertake successful  
24 performances. Goffman further defines a *social front*, which establishes the social  
25 classifications associated with specific roles. The social front becomes institutionalised in  
26 terms of the abstract stereotypical expectations that it evokes and the social position of the  
27 individual. For example, when individuals undertake occupations perceived to mismatch their  
28 gender identity, coping strategies and impression management are used to fit in (Hatmaker,  
29 2013). Through these interactions, individuals convince others of their membership in the  
30 occupation and deflect gendered beliefs that may disqualify their position. A particular  
31 relevance of these insights to the present study is how Sri Lankan women establish their  
32 legitimacy through performing entrepreneurship in social interaction. In other words,  
33 Goffman's theorisation is used in this paper to offer a feminist reading of how Sri Lankan  
34 women perform entrepreneurship in context and reveal the gendered nature of Sri Lankan  
35 women's entrepreneurial performances.

## 46 47 48 **Methodology**

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50 Studies, such as those based on the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), identify crucial  
51 trends surrounding key phenomena, including gender and entrepreneurship, around the world  
52 (Álvarez et al., 2014). In this study we adopt a qualitative research strategy, which we consider  
53 necessary to make sense of the complexities surrounding women's performance of  
54 entrepreneurship in the specific context of Sri Lanka. Following feminist standpoint  
55 epistemology, we hold that women in the Global South are embedded in unequal power  
56 relations shaped by patriarchy at the juncture class, caste, ethnicity, religion, language, and  
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3 lifecycle stage, and their entrepreneurial experiences are highly complex and multidimensional.  
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5 Feminist research requires methods that allow research to capture concealed or tacit elements  
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7 of women's lived experiences. Therefore, our study follows a multi-method approach based on  
8  
9 life history interviews with 44 participants and 40 field observations with 8 of the life history  
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11 interview participants (see Table 1).

12  
13 Connell (2010, 54) suggests LHIs can be a highly effective means of “decoding the  
14  
15 dynamics of the gender order”, which was integral to our study. When following the LHI  
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17 approach, the use of multiple interviews is recommended to ensure sufficient depth and  
18  
19 breadth. For example, Seidman (2006) recommends a three-interview structure where each  
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21 interview serves a purpose in uncovering the complexity of the respondent's life history, each  
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23 laying the foundation for the next exploratory interview. For our LHI's, we followed a two-  
24  
25 interview model supported by a pre-interview questionnaire. We built a timeline and collected  
26  
27 the participants' demographic data through the pre-interview questionnaire. This initial stage  
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29 also helped build rapport with the participants and addressed their possible apprehensions about  
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31 participating in a research study. In the case of field observations, five observation sessions  
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33 were conducted per participant.

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*Table 1 Participant demographics of this study*

In this study, entrepreneurship denotes a business owned solely or in partnership, where at least one of the owners would identify as a woman. Therefore, the term entrepreneur in this study is inclusive of founders (individuals who have founded the enterprise), second-generation owners (individuals who have inherited an enterprise and now operate as business owners) and co-owners (individuals who share the ownership of an enterprise). Our study considered three categories of business scale; Micro, SME, and Large (Table 2), following the framework utilised by Sri Lanka's Department of Census and Statistics.

*Table 2 Business category identifier – Sri Lanka (Department of Census and Statistics, 2015)*

One of the authors of this study practiced as an entrepreneur in Sri Lanka for five years. Drawing on a database of 30 women entrepreneurs maintained by the author, the participant

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3 recruitment initiated by inviting these 30 women entrepreneurs to take part in the study. The  
4 participants were then encouraged to refer the author to other women entrepreneurs within  
5 their own contact base. Participant recruitment involved the combination of purposive and  
6 snowball sampling approaches to ensure diversity of ethnicity and religion, and as such seven  
7 provinces in the island were targeted (Table 3). 70% of the participants of the study were  
8 recruited from the western province, which is considered the commercial capital of the island.  
9  
10 Nine ethnic categories comprise the Sri Lankan population: Sinhalese, Sri Lankan Tamil,  
11 Indian Tamil, Sri Lankan Chetty, Bharatha, Sri Lankan Moor, Malay, Burgher and other  
12 (Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2012). The Sinhalese account for the majority  
13 population in all provinces except for the Northern and Eastern provinces. The Northern  
14 province is dominated by the Sri Lankan Tamil community while both the Sri Lankan Tamil  
15 and Sri Lankan Moor community hold majority in the Eastern province. Within each region  
16 the cultural practices of the majority community have nuanced effects on other communities,  
17 resulting in complex variations within an ethnic community based on region. As illustrated in  
18 Table 3, the majority of the participants of the study were from the western province and of the  
19 Sinhala ethnicity. Although the composition of the participant pool aligned with the ethnic  
20 distribution in the region, a limitation of having participants mainly from the western province  
21 is that some underlying nuances of structure and agency resulting from social positioning  
22 within the cultural context may have eclipsed scrutiny. In an attempt to understand how women  
23 entrepreneurs challenge industry norms through their practice of entrepreneurship, the sample  
24 is inclusive of participants from traditionally male dominated and female dominated industries  
25 as illustrated in Table 1.

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43 *Table 3 Participant Distribution*

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48 In terms of their employment history, 73% of the participants reported that they have been  
49 employed prior to starting their business(es), while 27% were employed in another occupation  
50 concurrent to running their business. There was no direct link between the industry of  
51 employment and the industry of their business. Two types of business owners were studied:  
52 founders (84%) and second-generation owners (10%). 6% of the participants were founders of  
53 one or more ventures, as well as being second-generation owners.

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3 The data from both the LHIs and the observations were analysed thematically through NVivo.  
4 Coding started with primary nodes comprising initial codes, descriptive codes and structural  
5 codes based on the interview narratives and field notes. This resulted in a high volume of nodes  
6 that were then revisited through two iterations within the first cycle of coding. In the second  
7 cycle of coding, axial coding, pattern coding and focused coding were used to produce second-  
8 order coding through two iterations. Following the method proposed by Gioia et al. (2013),  
9 Table 4 represents the formation of the first-order codes, second-order codes and aggregate  
10 codes resulting from the data analysis, and Table 5 presents illustrative quotes from the coding  
11 process.  
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19 *Table 4 Data Structure*

20 *Table 5 Proportion of LHIs & observations with component theoretical dimension themes*

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25 The data analysis (Table 4) revealed a relationship between the theme *projected image* and  
26 *understanding of the audience*. This indicates that the projected image is designed based on the  
27 individual's understanding of the audience's dispositions and expectations. Within the theme  
28 *projected image*, several relationships were identified; *her persona* was associated with  
29 *keeping up appearances*, *managing roles* and *designing the space*, while *controlling*  
30 *interaction* was associated with *separating the roles based on appearance*. It was also  
31 identified that both *controlling interaction* and *separating the roles based on appearance*  
32 influenced *her persona*.  
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## 44 Findings

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46 The findings are organised around three main themes: understanding the audience, creating a  
47 persona, and space as an extension of the entrepreneurial persona.  
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### 53 Understanding the Audience

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55 In the data, 22 participants referred to their understanding of the audience and 21 referred to  
56 the audience's expectations of women entrepreneurs. The participants put a great deal of  
57 emphasis on understanding their audience, which they tended to achieve with greater finesse,  
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3 based on the frequency of interactions and their alertness to the community sociocultural  
4 beliefs. See Table 6 for supplementary illustrative quotes.  
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9 *Table 6 Illustrative quotes, themes, and dimensions – Understanding the Audience*

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13 Some participants used characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, class, and age, as critical cues  
14 to segment their audiences to more finely grained groupings. Referring to attributes that they  
15 either exposed to or shielded from the audience, women entrepreneurs often packaged the traits  
16 and dispositions of their entrepreneurial personae in ways that assured their fitness for the  
17 business context. Amaya (27-year-old, founder of a shoe company, Burgher ethnicity)  
18 explained:  
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24 *...if somebody approaches us and is interested to talk to us for a potential investment or*  
25 *could be a person selling us like, some technology... then I stalk the person a little [she*  
26 *laughs]. ‘Stalk’ as in, I go online and then I look them up you know, like on their Facebook*  
27 *page... I just try to gauge what sort of a person I am going to be speaking to or dealing*  
28 *with and then that persona, I think I make little-little, minor changes consciously to sort of*  
29 *appeal to them.*  
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35 For many of the participants, learning about the audience was a vital means of ensuring an  
36 appealing self-presentation in their entrepreneurial context. Successful attempts at securing the  
37 audience respect hinged on embodying the audience expectations and the audience-relevant  
38 cultural etiquette, which could have patriarchal undertones. Thus, entrepreneurial performance  
39 involved adroitly reflecting on the traits and dispositions of the audience, which could allow  
40 women entrepreneurs to establish a positive impression.  
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46 35 of the participants revealed how various phrases (scripts) or attributes of appearance  
47 could be incorporated strategically in social interactions. Arali (36-year-old, founder of a  
48 digital marketing agency, Sri Lankan Tamil ethnicity) explained that her performance tended  
49 to reflect the gender- and class-related beliefs held by her audience.  
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54 *It’s a cultural thing. For Tamil men, they always have to be macho! I have a lot of Pettah*  
55 *clients. Pettah clients are mostly from the Central Province. They have come to Pettah and*  
56 *have come up the hard way, but they are very good entrepreneurs! You will not see any*  
57 *other entrepreneurs like them! They would have come and worked at a shop and now you*  
58 *know they have big vehicles, and they are rich. They will give you work, but you can’t*  
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3 *overpower them. You need to be very subtle with them. You have to say 'Sir' [she pauses]*  
4 *or you have to call them 'Boss'.*  
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7 Working in a highly male-dominated contexts, such as the marketplace called *Pettah*<sup>1</sup>,  
8 intensified the meaning and significance of perceived gender differences. Thus, the  
9 participants in more masculinised lines of business often stepped into subordinate gender role  
10 identities to achieve entrepreneurial viability. In contrast to gender as an internalised attribute  
11 of one's self-concept, for the participants gender was thus at times a malleable element of  
12 entrepreneurial performance indicating one's power position and is attendant social protocols.  
13 Presenting a more acceptable persona to business audiences involved calculative choices that  
14 required expertise around the social norms as well as the male entrepreneurs' blind spots and  
15 prejudices within a deeply gendered business order. The performance of entrepreneurship  
16 thus required the participants to undertake an ongoing process of social cue seeking,  
17 contextual reflection, and strategic acumen to perfect their gendered self-projections upon  
18 changing audiences.  
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### 28 **Creating a persona**

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31 In the data, the appearance and mannerisms adopted to craft entrepreneurial personae shaped  
32 women entrepreneurs' capacity to sustain a positive and often profitable relationship with their  
33 audiences. While stereotypical beliefs relating to women-owned businesses posed barriers to  
34 women's choices and possibilities in the entrepreneurial setting, the participants believed they  
35 could neutralise at least some of the stigma their businesses faced through carefully calibrated  
36 impression management. In particular, creating an acceptable persona that maintained face,  
37 when challenges to their business and leadership roles ensued, defined the front region of  
38 women entrepreneurs' social interactions. See Table 7 for supplementary illustrative quotes.  
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48 *Table 7 Illustrative quotes, themes, and dimensions – Creating a Persona*

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52 The participants considered the process of creating entrepreneurial personae dynamic and  
53 variegated. The particularities of the audience and the specific local business context within  
54 which the participants' interaction occurred influenced the kinds of impressions women  
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58 <sup>1</sup> *Pettah* is a commercial marketplace in central Colombo, often visited by businesses and individuals to purchase  
59 products at whole-sale prices. This market is predominantly occupied by male vendors of Tamil and Muslim  
60 ethnicity.

entrepreneurs wished to make. 32 of the participants recognised the specifics of dress choice as a key element of impression management. Dress emerged as a producer of social reality, in is symbolic reference to particular cultural values in the society. Many of the participants revealed that gender ideals and even stereotypes were worked into how they customised their appearance and conducted themselves as woman entrepreneurs. Wathsala (32-year-old, second-generation owner of a garment factory, Sinhalese ethnicity) explained:

*So, if I have to pitch this proposal, I don't only work on the proposal, I also work on myself. Like, what am I going to wear today to pitch this proposal? Because it's all part of the job for me... Whereas a lot of people might be disheartened by that or find that demotivating, I find pleasure actually [she laughs] in getting it done. Not in a manipulative way but in that sense, you know. Because we are women! And we are naturally discriminated!*

Wathsala's account refers to the discrimination she has experienced as a second-generation business owner due to her age, lifecycle stage and gender. The participants considered the gendered exclusion they faced as a challenge to overcome by incorporating conventional or more modern versions of femininity into their entrepreneurial performances. By diversifying their appearance and mannerisms to appeal to the audience, they prioritised fluidity in their personae rather than a fixed, and defined sense of business identity. For example, while Wathsala dressed conservatively in a *kurta*<sup>2</sup> when she visited her factory in the village, she switched to western dress in the presence of her clients and peers in Colombo. Importantly, some participants, including Wathsala, regarded these modifications as strategic moves, she was unable to distinguish which one of the personae was more accurately reflected her self-concept. While they viewed the act of adapting to their changing contexts as a business exigency, at times they also expressed discomfort in reinforcing the very discriminatory dynamics that subordinated them. Nevertheless, there also appeared to be a sense that the entrepreneurial personae could redefine the audience's perceptions of women entrepreneurs, which could over time lead to change toward greater equality.

While crafting the personae involved projecting different entrepreneurial images in accordance with the dictates of different settings and the related audiences, in some cases the participants also set aside their entrepreneurial identity. Hansika (44-year-old, beautician, Sinhalese ethnicity) explained:

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<sup>2</sup> Traditionally a conservative Indian long dress with long sleeves.



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3 *Usually if I go for something big, then I wear a sari for sure. I am not a salon... I'm a*  
4 *businesswoman! So, for places like that I might lose respect if I wear a t-shirt, trousers and*  
5 *heavy makeup, as most of those who come to those events are gents. I should go among*  
6 *men in a way that I get their respect. Then I wear the sari for sure!... If I go to the bank, I*  
7 *go the way I am in the salon because there you should be a little posh! So, I may wear t-*  
8 *shirt, blouse or trousers. I get respect there because they recognise me and come and speak*  
9 *to me as soon as they see me. Most of them are my clients. But in the village, anything is*  
10 *fine, even slippers. So, mainly the sari is for the biggest events. That's how it is. I can't go*  
11 *beyond it; sari is the most important thing to me in those situations.*

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19 Although among male business owners in her region, Hansika presented herself as a business  
20 owner of equal standing; in the presence of clients and acquaintances she sought to present a  
21 persona that reflected her brand image; and finally among the villagers she attempted to fit in  
22 as a fellow villager, separating herself from the role of a business owner altogether. References  
23 to *sari* as symbolic carrier of respect were prominent in some of the field interviews. 14 women  
24 referred to how the sari was a means of commanding respect in spaces where they presented  
25 themselves as entrepreneurs, especially during ceremonial events. In Sri Lanka, where the sari  
26 carries nationalistic symbolism and acts as an ethnic marker, as well as a signifier of modesty,  
27 maintaining the purity of womanly virtue (Marecek, 2000). In this light, by wearing the sari  
28 some of the participants commanded respectability even as they partook in business activity  
29 because of sari's implication in the reproduction of cultural value. In contemporary Sri Lanka,  
30 the nuanced relationship between dress and ethnicity, class and caste continues to exist.  
31 Traditionally religious beliefs, closely linked to ethnicity, were used to regulate morality,  
32 respect and virtue, conveyed through attire; this defined what is considered *socially-accepted*  
33 *dress* for both women and men. It is important to note that, in the late 19th and early 20th  
34 century, a mission was undertaken by nationalists to introduce *respectability* to the Sinhala  
35 Buddhist community, who were often marginalised under colonial rule. This was carried out  
36 by combining Victorian sensibilities with Indian patriarchal traditions, to present a set of local-  
37 ideal-type behaviours that prescribed *decent* and *correct* manners and morals. Within this  
38 framework, women took a leading role in preserving the nation's cultural purity (Hewamanne,  
39 2016; de Mel, 2001). For example, the *osariya* or *Kandyian saree* was declared the national  
40 dress for Sinhalese women and acted as symbolic of not only ethnicity, but also located women  
41 as upper caste and class. Unlike other ethnicities, who continued to preserve their cultural  
42 connection to pre-colonial national dress, the Sinhalese dress for women was influenced by  
43 Dutch style collars, frills, cuffs and hemlines (Wickramasinghe, 2003). Today, the sari itself is

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3 used as a way of communicating ethnicity, social status, respect and virtue in Sinhalese and  
4 Tamil communities. What is most interesting in this regard is how appearance is still considered  
5 a status symbol in Sri Lankan society.  
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9 The personae developed as part of interacting with the audience evolved across the  
10 different roles undertaken by the women entrepreneurs. For example, the participants often  
11 referred to their diversified roles as client, supplier or manager, while also mentioning external  
12 roles, such as wife, mother, daughter, friend, etc. In each of these cases the personae underwent  
13 changes to suit the context of interaction such that a multifaceted form of the entrepreneurial  
14 self was maintained. 30 participants referred to how they used mannerism to create and manage  
15 impressions across the various roles they stepped in and out of in their performance of  
16 entrepreneurship. For example, in the observation carried out in relation to Nadeesha (35-year-  
17 old, second-generation manufacturer of hotel supplies, Sinhalese ethnicity) revealed a high  
18 degree of variability in terms of the entrepreneurial images she projected. The following  
19 observation was carried out at her office during a client meeting.  
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29 *Two male clients arrive. She humorously greets the men in Sinhala<sup>3</sup> but she is firm in her*  
30 *tone, creating a business-like atmosphere. She moves to the side of the table with a single*  
31 *chair and takes her seat while the men remain standing. She gets up and moves towards*  
32 *the men and calls out loudly to her personal assistant in Sinhala to bring chilled drinks for*  
33 *the guests. She says this humorously, lightening the atmosphere in the room. She then takes*  
34 *her seat, the men follow on cue and take their seat at the opposite end of the table. She*  
35 *leads the discussion negotiating about the order. She uses volume and tone to dominate the*  
36 *conversation. She uses hand gestures to emphasise what she is saying and carefully guides*  
37 *the clients' attention to areas of the space to which she wants to give emphasis. She uses*  
38 *simple everyday Sinhalese, as well as masculine words such as 'gaani' [woman] and*  
39 *'wareng' [come] in the conversation. The two men respond to it by laughing. She carries*  
40 *the conversation with a light tone but makes sure that the conversation is focused and does*  
41 *not deviate from the negotiation. Occasionally she lightens the seriousness of the*  
42 *conversation by briefly flattering the two gentlemen. She uses phrases such as 'yako'*  
43 *[demon], 'umbala' [you both] to refer to the men and the atmosphere is kept light. She*  
44 *calls out to a staff member and a woman enters the space. Nadeesha turns her head to the*  
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59 <sup>3</sup> Sinhala is the native language of the Sinhalese people and is also used as the first language by other ethnicities  
60 in the island.

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3 *elderly woman and advises her in a softer tone to call in the personal assistant. Her facial*  
4 *expressions are soft as she does this. (Field Observation Notes)*  
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8 The above excerpt exemplifies how the participants at times used mannerisms, tone of voice,  
9 and audience-sensitive phraseology to maintain particular personae, and how the  
10 entrepreneurial personae could change in extremely nuanced ways across participant roles  
11 (entrepreneur-businessowner and entrepreneur-manager). In the observations, all participants  
12 used terms and phrases to differentiate the specific nature of the interaction taking place  
13 keeping in mind the particularities of their audiences, creating different fronts within the front  
14 region.  
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### 19 20 **Extending the persona through space**

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22 For most of the participants, the interactional setting had a significant impact on the  
23 performance that they carried out. Reflecting the salience of space for the performance of  
24 entrepreneurship, the participants exerted a great deal of control on the organisation of their  
25 work environments. See Table 7 for supplementary illustrative quotes.  
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32 *Table 8 Illustrative quotes, themes, and dimensions – Space as an extension of her entrepreneurial persona*  
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37 The observation with Nadeesha (35-year-old, second-generation manufacturer of hotel  
38 supplies, Sinhalese ethnicity) was highly indicative of the systematic division of space  
39 mirroring the conceptual distinctions between back stage and front stage in Goffmanian terms:  
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43 *Her office room is surrounded by tinted glass panels, so that she can see the staff members*  
44 *seated outside at their workstations. There is a division separating her office room into*  
45 *two. One side appears to be allocated for her daily use, while the other is designed for*  
46 *entertaining guests. The office for daily use appears disorganised and has ornaments and*  
47 *a novel propped up on top of some files. On the separator, drawings by her children are*  
48 *hung such that they are not visible to anyone outside this space. In the corner of the room*  
49 *there is an armchair with a baby pillow. It is positioned such that it cannot be seen by staff*  
50 *or visitors outside this space. The opposite side of the separator is a well-arranged room*  
51 *with a small table, one side with a single seat and the other side having two seats for guests.*  
52 *Against the wall, product samples are neatly arranged. The room is designed such that*  
53 *those seated around the table cannot see into the other half of the room and only she who*  
54 *is seated at the head of the table can see into the office area used by the staff. Adjacent to*  
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3 *her office is a similar glass cubicle occupied by her father the founder of the business.*

4 *(Field Observation Notes)*  
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7 The design and layout of this setting gives an example of how the space could be used by  
8 participants to carefully manage the various roles they held while performing entrepreneurship.  
9 During the post-observation discussion, Nadeesha explained that she often rested on the  
10 armchair when she got a few minutes to herself to think about various business concerns. But  
11 recently, due to her busy schedule, she spent whatever free time she could find inside a storage  
12 room where she would be unseen so that she could separate herself from her surroundings.  
13 However, even within this space, Nadeesha continued to be aware of her entrepreneurial role  
14 despite stepping back from the persona she presented to the audience. For some participants,  
15 spatial separation was thus only partially feasible, as being an entrepreneur became an  
16 internalised and embedded process. Furthermore, while Nadeesha sought out private spaces to  
17 step into the back region, her father did not make use of use alternative spaces, revealing how  
18 the masculine coding of entrepreneurship required women to undertake additional labour (e.g.,  
19 preparing in the back stage to face the world in the front stage) to maintain their legitimacy. As  
20 a result, the women entrepreneurs had a constant awareness their performance straddled across  
21 the front and back regions.  
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24 Spatial differences across the front and back stages were accentuated by the tone and style of  
25 the rooms, indicating widely different performances from the same individual. The busy nature  
26 of the room conveyed a sense of urgency to those who enter the space, but at the same time the  
27 casual nature of the room supported the relaxed style in which she interacted with her  
28 employees. The children's drawing reflected an emphasis on the maternal role, which was  
29 extended into the business by way of the maternal tone with which she spoke to the younger  
30 employees who entered the space. In this way, spaces bled into each other despite their  
31 differences, rather than being distinctive units, although beyond the separator, Nadeesha more  
32 fully stepped into the role of entrepreneur-business owner. Those who entered the business-  
33 centric space got an impression of formality and authority, which she maintained throughout  
34 her interactions.  
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37 In participants' accounts, their entrepreneurial personae were intricately bound with the nature  
38 and implications of the spaces in which entrepreneurial interactions took place. Similarly, all  
39 eight participants of the observations revealed how the space was differentiated based on the  
40 entrepreneurial roles the participants stepped into. Thus, the setting provided a boundary, albeit  
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porously, for the various roles the participants traversed. In this way, space emerged as an extension of the entrepreneurial personae to support the performance of entrepreneurship presented to the audience.

### **Discussion and concluding remarks**

From the outset, our research tapped into the scholarly call to arms issued by Al-Dajani and Marlow (2014), when they lamented the limited geographic coverage of the gender and entrepreneurship literature beyond the West. Problematising the predominant western focus in the scholarship, we set out to ensure that the voices of women entrepreneurs in the Global South could be heard, and their business activities could be visibilised. By conducting a study in the under-studied context of Sri Lanka, we extend the empirical understanding of women's entrepreneurship into more diverse settings, thereby enriching the existing stock of knowledge by introducing further nuance and texture. However, we also build on prior research from the West, which indicates the presence of a robust cultural interplay between gender and entrepreneurship (Bruni et al., 2004; Giazitzoglu and Down, 2017). We underscore the narrowness and insufficiency of essentialist perspectives regarding men and women by exploring the ingenuity with which women constrained by a variety of societal barriers perform entrepreneurship in ways that facilitate their resistance and survival against impossible odds. In this light, our research cautions policymakers against implicit reliance on essentialist ideas and judgments that can reproduce the problems faced by women rather than resolving them.

Erickson (1995) suggests that individuals who are deemed part of an oppressed group are likely to experience predicaments that require them to choose between behaving in a manner that harmonises with their putative self or behaving according to the demands and requirements of powerful others. In exploring gendered performances of entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka, our research indicates that the study of women's business activities should pay attention to the various public and private roles they step into and out of throughout their daily lives. Echoing Spivack and Desai (2016), our research suggests that women entrepreneurs manage the work-life demands of gendered role expectations as women as well as occupational role demands as entrepreneurs. Thus, the complexities and contradictions of the gendered roles women entrepreneurs fulfil require carefully crafted strategies keeping in mind the larger social context within which they are embedded. Although women entrepreneurs do not always see themselves as disadvantaged others, our research shows that they are often positioned as secondary in the realm of entrepreneurship. The masculine norm enforced by the traditional view of the

entrepreneur sets a logic of us against them (Ahl, 2006; Ahl and Marlow, 2012; Marlow and Patton, 2005), which further challenges women's performance of entrepreneurship. Especially in the context of Sri Lanka, our participants accounts highlight, a clear differentiation exists between businesses owned by women vs. those owned by men. As a result, women entrepreneurs face a continual internalised conflict in how to present themselves in social interactions, which is an issue that needs to be scrutinised further in future research. As Champenois et al. (2020) argues there is much promise in the potential alliance of critical entrepreneurship and practice-based studies. While our research focuses on women's performance of entrepreneurship, our insights can be taken up fruitfully in future practice-theoretical research on gender and entrepreneurship.

In this work, we also make theoretical contributions to Goffman's symbolic interaction, particularly in how space is conceptualised. Firstly, in the case of women entrepreneurs, space becomes an intricate element of the performance. While space is strategically used to support the performance based on the audience's expectations, it is also used as a means of separating the gendered roles they must step in and out of within the performance. Secondly, for women entrepreneurs, the front region and back region are not distinctly separate. To maintain their legitimacy as entrepreneurs, even in confined private spaces, women continue to carry on elements of their performance and undertake additional labour such that slippages will not undermine their acceptance as entrepreneurs. As a result, the spatiality of the performance becomes bound to the personae and the process of impression management. Recent research on women entrepreneurs shows the gendered nature of the spaces occupied by women entrepreneurs (e.g., Ekinsmyth, 2013; Luo and Chan, 2021; Rodríguez-Modroño, 2021). Yet, Schäfer (2021) argues that when the speciality of entrepreneurship is examined it is often by using space as a way of locating the study participants. As a result, the understanding of space as perceived and socially constructed is significantly under-recognised in entrepreneurship research, which promises to be a fruitful avenue for advancing gender and entrepreneurship research. In this light, policymakers particularly need to take note of the salience of space and its resonance for women entrepreneurs, as they are perennially situated at the crossroads of public and private domains.

Leary and Kowalski (1990) identify that impression management involves two distinct processes; *impression motivation* and *impression construction*. While impression motivation focuses on ensuring an individual's public persona remains intact, the impression construction involves the altering of behaviours to affect the audiences impression of them. Our contribution

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3 to Goffman's theorisation of impression management further posits how the understanding of  
4 the audience allows for impression motivation and how this shapes the role-governed nature of  
5 self-presentation.  
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9 In the context of Sri Lanka, Attygalle et al. (2014) recognise the significant disparity of the  
10 information provided by organisations to men and women entrepreneurs, putting women at a  
11 disadvantage. The narrow understanding of women-owned ventures and women entrepreneurs'  
12 needs constrains women from seeking opportunities and breaking structural barriers. The  
13 findings of this study present a deeper understanding of women entrepreneurs in the global  
14 south, which contradicts the stereotypical image of the small-scale/homebound  
15 underperforming business owner. We hope that these findings of how women perform  
16 entrepreneurship shifts policy makers view and understanding of entrepreneurship and aid the  
17 development of strategies that support and benefit women to engage in this occupation.  
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25 The findings of this study also present insights to practitioners by unravelling how every day  
26 interactions can be used strategically to shift perceptions allowing women entrepreneurs to  
27 challenge underlying presumptions attached to gender, entrepreneurship and industry that  
28 disadvantage them. In doing so, we find that the body, space and the women entrepreneur's  
29 understanding of the audience become powerful tools that can be drawn on to manage and  
30 construct impressions.  
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36 And finally, our research highlights that gender is but one dimension among many interlocking  
37 identity categories, at the juncture of which women's entrepreneurship transpires.  
38 Intersectionality is an increasingly prominent sensibility in Western research, particularly for  
39 papers investigating the experiences of minority women or more specifically migrant women  
40 in North America and Europe (e.g., Essers and Tedmanson, 2014). Yet, it is vital that  
41 intersectional sensitivity is also mobilised in the non-Western context. As our research shows,  
42 in developing country contexts, shaped by the critical juncture of tradition and modernity,  
43 myriad contextually salient identity categories may work together to constitute points of  
44 stratification in women entrepreneurs' work lives. Reflecting this complexity, our account of  
45 how women perform entrepreneurship is culturally and historically constructed, and  
46 inseparable from the norms, rules, and protocols that remain salient in the Sri Lankan context.  
47 This paper did not explore in-depth the intersectional nature of entrepreneurial performance by  
48 women, yet, our findings highlight the need to further study intersectionality through emic  
49 attention to context (Tatli and Ozbilgin, 2012), It is also imperative that policymakers look at  
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women's concerns in the domain of entrepreneurship, from a context sensitive intersectional perspective rather than blunt addition of categories of difference in a vacuum.

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Table 1 Participant demographics of this study

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Religion	Highest Education level	Previously employed	Currently employed elsewhere	Marital Status	Children	Location of Business	Scale	Ownership Type	Business type	LHIs/ Observations
Amanda	60	Sinhalese	Christian	GCE A/L	Yes	No	Married	Yes	Western Province	Micro	Founder	• Beautician	LHIs
Amaya	27	Burgher	Other	Masters	Yes	Yes	Single	No	Western Province	SME	Founder	• Shoe manufacturer	LHIs
Angela	44	Burgher	Christian	Diploma	Yes	No	Married	Yes	Western Province	Micro	Founder	• Bespoke linen company	LHIs
Anjalee	33	Sinhalese	Buddhist	GCE A/L	Yes	No	Single	No	Western Province	SME	Founder	• Café	LHIs
Anu	28	Indian Tamil	Hindu	GCE O/L	Yes	No	Married	No	Western Province	Micro	Founder	• Yoga studio	LHIs & Field Observations
Arali	36	Sri Lankan Tamil	Hindu	Masters	Yes	No	Married	Yes	Western Province	Micro	Founder	• Digital marketing company	LHIs
Bhavani	65	Sri Lankan Tamil	Hindu	GCE O/L	No	Yes	Married	Yes	Eastern Province	Micro	Founder	• Fish vendor	LHIs
Chandramali	67	Sinhalese	Buddhist	GCE O/L	No	No	Married	Yes	Southern Province	Micro	Founder	• Traditional lace manufacturer social enterprise	LHIs
Cristina	40	Sinhalese	Christian	GCE A/L	Yes	Yes	Married	No	Western Province	Micro	Founder/ Second Generation Owner	• Beautician	LHIs & Field Observations
Dinithi	33	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Masters	Yes	No	Single	No	Western Province	Micro	Founder	• Travel company • Tutoring service	LHIs
Fayasa	38	Sri Lankan Moor	Islam	Masters	Yes	Yes	Married	Yes	Western Province	Micro	Founder	• Baby clothing • Ethnic clothing	LHIs

Dinusha	33	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Degree	Yes	Yes	Single	No	Western Province	Micro	Founder/ Second Generation Owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction material company</li> <li>• Events company</li> <li>• Bespoke packaging</li> </ul>	LHIs
Gajani	45	Sri Lankan Tamil	Christian	Masters	Yes	Yes	Married	Yes	Eastern Province	SME	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social enterprise marketplace</li> </ul>	LHIs
Geetha	68	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Below GCE O/L	Yes	Yes	Married	Yes	Western Province	Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shoe manufacturer</li> </ul>	LHIs
Hafeeza	44	Sri Lankan Moor	Islam	Masters	Yes	No	Married	Yes	Western Province	Large	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT company</li> </ul>	LHIs
Hansika	44	Sinhalese	Buddhist	GCE O/L	No	No	Married	Yes	North Central Province	Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beautician</li> </ul>	LHIs & Field Observations
Hashani	35	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Degree	Yes	No	Married	No	Western Province	SME	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Café</li> </ul>	LHIs & Field Observations
Himasha	28	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Degree	Yes	No	Single	No	Western Province	Micro	Founder/ Second Generation Owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Café</li> </ul>	LHIs & Field Observations
Imesha	31	Sinhalese	Christian	Degree	Yes	No	Single	No	Western Province	Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech therapy clinic</li> </ul>	LHIs
Indrani	71	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Degree	Yes	No	Married	Yes	Central Province	Large	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food factory</li> </ul>	LHIs
Isaipriya	54	Sri Lankan Tamil	Hindu	GCE A/L	No	No	Married	No	Eastern Province	Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food outlet</li> </ul>	LHIs
Ishika	34	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Masters	Yes	Yes	Single	No	Western Province	Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stationary company</li> </ul>	LHIs
Janani	35	Sinhalese	Christian	Masters	Yes	Yes	Married	No	Western Province	Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homebaker</li> </ul>	LHIs



										Western Province			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online preowned bookshop</li> <li>• Exotic homeware</li> </ul>	LHIs
Kasuni	39	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Degree	No	yes	Married	Yes			Micro	Founder		
Kaveesha	28	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Masters	Yes	yes	Married	No	Western Province		Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Party product</li> </ul>	LHIs
Luxmi	50	Sri Lankan Tamil	Hindu	GCE O/L	No	No	Married	Yes	Northern Province		Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fish vendor</li> </ul>	LHIs
Mallika	67	Sinhalese	Buddhist	GCE A/L	No	No	Married	Yes	Western Province		Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailoring service</li> </ul>	LHIs
Nadeesha	35	Sinhalese	Christian	Degree	No	No	Married	Yes	Western Province		SME	Second Generation Owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manufacturer of hotel supplies</li> </ul>	LHIs & Field Observations
Nalini	64	Sinhalese	Buddhist	GCE O/L	Yes	No	Married	Yes	Western Province		SME	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social enterprise on preschool education</li> </ul>	LHIs
Natasha	20	Sinhalese	Buddhist	GCE A/L	No	No	Single	No	Western Province		Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plant based beauty product</li> </ul>	LHIs
Navoda	44	Sinhalese	Other	Degree	Yes	No	Single	No	Western Province		SME	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boutique hotel</li> </ul>	LHIs
Nethmi	36	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Masters	Yes	No	Single	No	Western Province		Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designer label</li> </ul>	LHIs & Field Observations
Noofa	27	Sri Lankan Moor	Islam	Degree	Yes	No	Married	No	Western Province		Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand-made artisanal soap</li> </ul>	LHIs
Pawani	33	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Masters	Yes	No	Married	Yes	Western Province		SME	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social enterprise marketplace</li> </ul>	LHIs
Raagavi	76	Sri Lankan Tamil	Hindu	GCE O/L	No	No	Married	Yes	Northern Province		Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailoring shop</li> </ul>	LHIs
Rathnawathi	73	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Below GCE O/L	Yes	No	Single	No	Central Province		Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Batik business</li> </ul>	LHIs
Roshani	31	Sinhalese	Buddhist	GCE A/L	Yes	No	Married	No	Western Province		Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Womenswear boutique</li> </ul>	LHIs

Rukmani	60	Sinhalese	Buddhist	GCE A/L	No	No	Married	Yes	Western Province	SME	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegan food outlet</li> </ul>	LHIs
Sachini	32	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Masters	Yes	No	Married	No	Western Province	SME	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Café</li> </ul>	LHIs & Field Observations
Shriyani	63	Sinhalese	Buddhist	GCE A/L	Yes	Yes	Single	Yes	Western Province	Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handmade women and children accessories</li> </ul>	LHIs
Supuni	31	Sinhalese	Buddhist	GCE A/L	Yes	No	Married	Yes	North Central Province	Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car service centre</li> </ul>	LHIs
Umaiyarl	70	Sri Lankan Tamil	Hindu	GCE A/L	No	No	Married	Yes	Northern Province	Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailoring</li> </ul>	LHIs
Upeksha	28	Sinhalese	Buddhist	GCE A/L	Yes	No	Married	Yes	Southern Province	Micro	Founder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homebaker</li> </ul>	LHIs
Wathsala	32	Sinhalese	Buddhist	Masters	Yes	No	Married	No	North Western Province	Large	Second Generation Owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garment factory</li> </ul>	LHIs

Table 1 Business category identifier – Sri Lanka (Department of Census and Statistics, 2015)

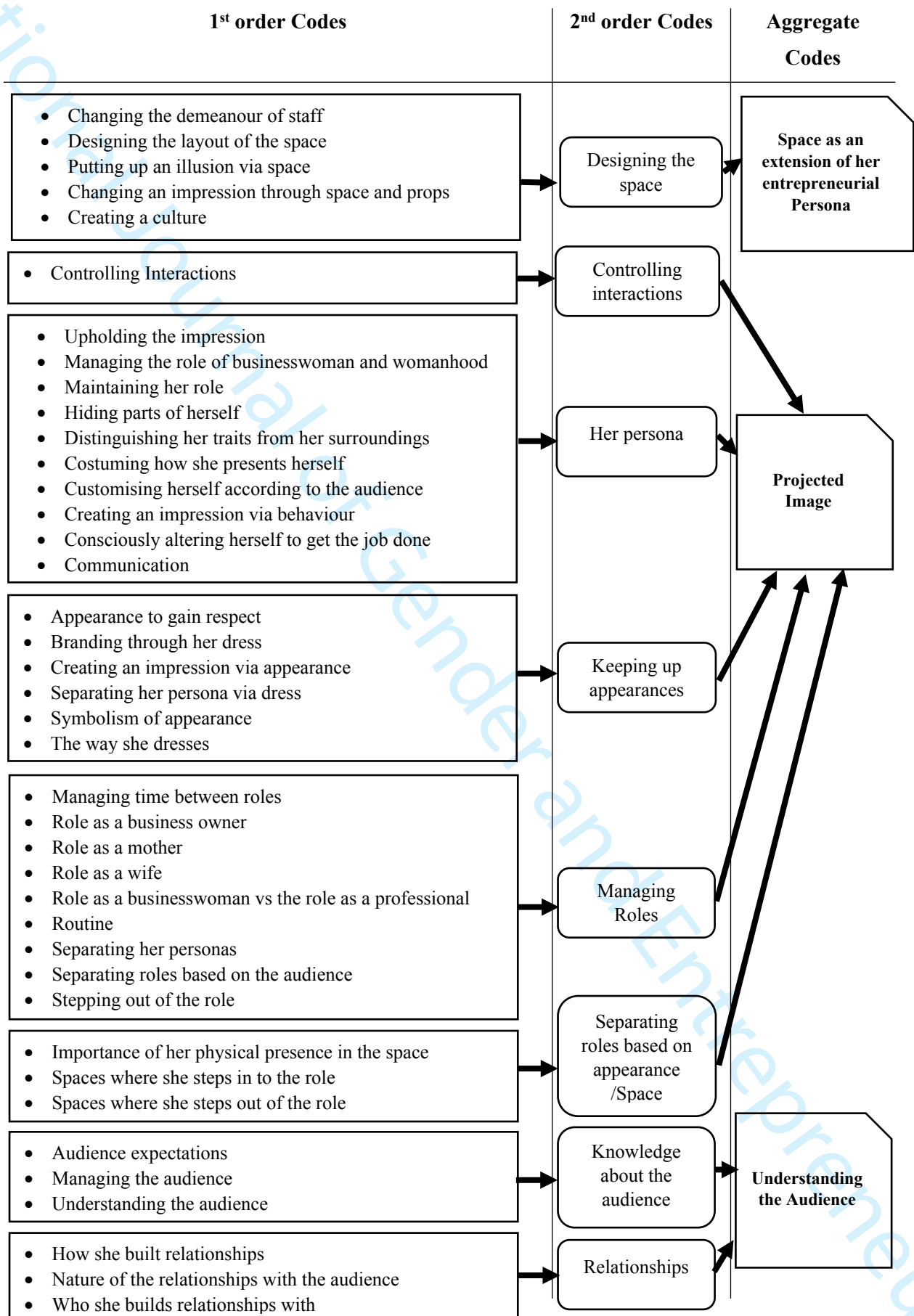
<b>Economic Sector</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>
Industry and Construction	Micro	1 to 4
	Small & Medium	5 to 199
	Large	Over 200
Trade	Micro	1 to 3
	Small & Medium	4 to 34
	Large	Over 35
Service	Micro	1 to 4

Table 3 Participant Distribution

<b>Province</b>	<b>Ethnic distribution in the province</b> (Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2012)	<b>Religious distribution in the province</b> (Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2012)	<b>Participants by province</b>	<b>Participants by ethnicity</b>	<b>Participants by religion</b>
<i>Northern Province</i>	<i>Sinhala – 3%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Tamil – 93%</i> <i>Indian Tamil – 1%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Moor – 3%</i> <i>Burgher – 0.02%</i> <i>Malay – 0.01%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Chetty – 0.002%</i> <i>Bharatha – 0.002%</i> <i>Other – 0.02%</i>	<i>Buddhist – 3%</i> <i>Hindu – 74%</i> <i>Islami – 3%</i> <i>Roman Catholic – 16%</i> <i>Other Christian – 4%</i> <i>Other – 0.03%</i>	<i>7%</i> <i>(3 participants)</i>	<i>Sri Lankan Tamil – 7%</i> <i>(3 participants)</i>	<i>Hindu – 7%</i> <i>(3 participants)</i>
<i>North-western Province</i>	<i>Sinhala – 86%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Tamil – 3%</i> <i>Indian Tamil – 0.2%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Moor – 11%</i> <i>Burgher – 0.1%</i> <i>Malay – 0.1%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Chetty – 0.01%</i> <i>Bharatha – 0.01%</i> <i>Other – 0.09%</i>	<i>Buddhist – 74%</i> <i>Hindu – 2%</i> <i>Islami – 11%</i> <i>Roman Catholic – 12%</i> <i>Other Christian – 1%</i> <i>Other – 0.1%</i>	<i>2%</i> <i>(1 participant)</i>	<i>Sinhala – 2%</i> <i>(1 participant)</i>	<i>Buddhist – 2%</i> <i>(1 participant)</i>
<i>North-central Province</i>	<i>Sinhala – 91%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Tamil – 1%</i> <i>Indian Tamil – 0.1%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Moor – 8%</i> <i>Burgher – 0.03%</i> <i>Malay – 0.02%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Chetty – 0.002%</i> <i>Bharatha – 0.003%</i> <i>Other – 0.1%</i>	<i>Buddhist – 90%</i> <i>Hindu – 1%</i> <i>Islami – 8%</i> <i>Roman Catholic – 1%</i> <i>Other Christian – 0.4%</i> <i>Other – 0.01%</i>	<i>5%</i> <i>(2 participants)</i>	<i>Sinhala – 5%</i> <i>(2 participants)</i>	<i>Buddhist – 5%</i> <i>(2 participants)</i>
<i>Central Province</i>	<i>Sinhala – 66%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Tamil – 5%</i> <i>Indian Tamil – 19%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Moor – 10%</i> <i>Burgher – 0.1%</i> <i>Malay – 0.1%</i>	<i>Buddhist – 65%</i> <i>Hindu – 21%</i> <i>Islami – 10%</i> <i>Roman Catholic – 3%</i> <i>Other Christian – 1.2%</i> <i>Other – 0.01%</i>	<i>5%</i> <i>(2 participants)</i>	<i>Sinhala – 5%</i> <i>(2 participants)</i>	<i>Buddhist – 5%</i> <i>(2 participants)</i>

	<i>Sri Lankan Chetty – 0.01%</i> <i>Bharatha – 0.002%</i> <i>Other – 0.01%</i>				
<i>Eastern Province</i>	<i>Sinhala – 23%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Tamil – 39%</i> <i>Indian Tamil – 0.3%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Moor – 37%</i> <i>Burgher – 0.3%</i> <i>Malay – 0.04%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Chetty – 0.002%</i> <i>Bharatha – 0.0003%</i> <i>Other – 0.01%</i>	<i>Buddhist – 23%</i> <i>Hindu – 35%</i> <i>Islami – 37%</i> <i>Roman Catholic – 3%</i> <i>Other Christian – 2.3%</i> <i>Other – 0.01%</i>	<i>7%</i> <i>(3 participants)</i>	<i>Sri Lankan Tamil – 7%</i> <i>(3 participants)</i>	<i>Hindu – 5% (2 participants)</i> <i>Other Christian – 2%</i> <i>(1 participant)</i>
<i>Western Province</i>	<i>Sinhala – 84%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Tamil – 6%</i> <i>Indian Tamil – 1%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Moor – 8%</i> <i>Burgher – 0.4%</i> <i>Malay – 0.5%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Chetty – 0.08%</i> <i>Bharatha – 0.02%</i> <i>Other – 0.2%</i>	<i>Buddhist – 73%</i> <i>Hindu – 5%</i> <i>Islami – 9%</i> <i>Roman Catholic – 11%</i> <i>Other Christian – 2%</i> <i>Other – 0.06%</i>	<i>70%</i> <i>(31 participants)</i>	<i>Sinhala – 55% (24 participants)</i> <i>Sri Lankan Tamil – 2% (1 participant)</i> <i>Indian Tamil – 2% (1 participant)</i> <i>Sri Lankan Moor – 7% (3 participants)</i> <i>Burgher – 5% (2 participants)</i>	<i>Buddhist – 41% (18 participants)</i> <i>Hindu – 5% (2 participants)</i> <i>Islam – 7% (3 participants)</i> <i>Other Christian – 14% (6 participants)</i> <i>Other – 5% (2 participants)</i>
<i>Southern Province</i>	<i>Sinhala – 95%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Tamil – 1%</i> <i>Indian Tamil – 1%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Moor – 3%</i> <i>Burgher – 0.02%</i> <i>Malay – 0.3%</i> <i>Sri Lankan Chetty – 0.001%</i> <i>Bharatha – 0.001%</i> <i>Other – 0.04%</i>	<i>Buddhist – 95%</i> <i>Hindu – 1%</i> <i>Islami – 3%</i> <i>Roman Catholic – 0.3%</i> <i>Other Christian – 0.4%</i> <i>Other – 0.02%</i>	<i>5%</i> <i>(2 participants)</i>	<i>Sinhala – 5% (2 participants)</i>	<i>Buddhist – 5% (2 participants)</i>

Table 4 Data Structure



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Table 5 Proportion of LHIs &amp; observations with component theoretical dimension themes

Theoretical Dimension and Component Themes	Number of LHIs & observations	Proportion
<b><i>Space as an extension of her entrepreneurial persona</i></b>	<b>32</b>	<b>73%</b>
Designing The Space	32	73%
<b><i>Projected Image</i></b>	<b>43</b>	<b>98%</b>
Controlling Interactions	7	16%
Her Persona	39	89%
Keeping up appearances	39	89%
Managing Roles	35	80%
Separating roles based on appearance/space	25	57%
<b><i>Understanding the audience</i></b>	<b>40</b>	<b>91%</b>
Knowledge about the audience	29	66%
Relationships	17	39%



Table 6 Illustrative quotes, themes, and dimensions – Understanding the Audience

First Order Codes and illustrative quotes	Second Order Codes	Aggregate Codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'When I am selling to the houses, I also change the way I speak, the talking style and the language and everything based on the family. Also, based on the age, when we see older people, we have to say; sir, come madam, younger sister [she laughs]. it is a form of respect right? if we say; come yo! Buy this fish yo! Would they come and buy form us? So I call them like that so that they would buy form us.'</i> <b>(Interview - Bhavani, 65 years old, Sri Lankan Tamil, Founder-fish vendor)</b></li> <li>• <i>'Certain students they you know, they talk about their religion and you know everything here. So, with them I need to be a bit more careful. I have to listen to them. I used to say some... For few I say 'Buddhu Saraniai!' [blessings of the Buddha] when they are going. Some I will say god bless you. So, it's like it differs from person to person I would say because not everyone... I feel that people still have that mindset Hindu, Sinhala mindset is still there. Especially among the ladies I feel. I personally feel that. Not with the men, especially among the ladies. Especially among the house wives. I personally feel that. So, with them I can't just show my upper hand or my restrain with them. So, I need to deal with them in a very careful way. I can ask them ah 'akki [elder sister] did you go? Shall I also come? Shall we go to 'Rajamaha Vihara' [Buddhist temple]?' that kind of you shape up and talk to them.'</i> <b>(Interview - Anu, 28 years old, Indian Tamil, Founder of a yoga studio)</b></li> <li>• <i>'So, it hasn't been a problem for me, but I do turn it down like especially for tutoring I think I kind of try. I don't always end up being successful, but I try to be a bit more culturally aware of where my students have come from. And what their sensitivities maybe. Even though I need to just get this work done. So, I think actually does play a bigger role in like tutoring... I am more aware of this cultural difference, definitely when I am here, like tutoring than I am with Travel Line unless something very specific happens.'</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Knowledge About the Audience</b></p>	<p><b>Understanding the Audience</b></p>

<p><b>(Interview - Dinithi, 33 year old, Sinhala, Founder of a travel company and tutoring service)</b></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'At the market various people come and buy from us. I also sell directly to homes that I have built relationships with and those homes also come from varying classes. Lower level people and higher-level people. Anyone who wants fish I will sell to them.' <b>(Interview - Bhavani, 65 years old, Sri Lankan Tamil, Founder-fish vendor)</b></li> <li>• 'All those stakeholders are different people. I don't worry about anyone, I work as they are my own people. Peacefully. Whether they are educated or not, or regardless of the level, all are same for me. Even if they call Madam in the beginning, later on we will be friends [she laughs]. I work very closely with everyone. To me the workers who work under me to the Madam up there are both equal.' <b>(Interview - Chandramali, 67 years old, Sinhala, Founder of a traditional lace making social enterprise)</b></li> <li>• 'We have also gone through a lot of grief together. There has been very painful incidences that have happened to some of the employees families. But we have all like being like a family going through those grief together. Because of that they've seen how I've supported and being there on a very personal level. It's not about financially guiding and counselling and supporting. So, for that I think they are very, very grateful. And also if there was a chance that we made more money or we did well. We make it a point to share it with them. So... So, I think all that... And I constantly give recognition to them. I am always you know complimenting them and making them feel good. So, in that context I think they feel comfortable.' <b>(Interview - Navoda, 44 years old, Founder of a boutique hotel)</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Relationships</b></p>	

Table 7 Illustrative quotes, themes, and dimensions – Creating a Persona

First Order Codes and illustrative quotes	Second Order Codes	Aggregate Codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>' I observe how she separates her role as an entrepreneur from the role of teacher as I observe. Her interaction with the customers seems to be carefully designed to maintain the relationship of service provider and customer but also teacher and student. She uses the tone of her voice to carefully maintain the atmosphere in the room. The audience responds to the tone. there is a strong sense of trust established between Anu as the instructor and the clients as students.'</i> <b>(Field Notes – Anu, 28 years old, Indian Tamil, Founder of a yoga studio)</b></li> <li>• <i>'She is in the treatment area. She is advising a staff member in front of another staff member and clients. As she does this her tone is authoritative and loud. She carefully chooses the words she uses and pronounces them clearly to the staff member. The staff member listens attentively. There is a distinct sense of control in how she speaks. Her body language is well poised. The clients are in separate sections of the room getting treatments done. But it is apparent that as she speaks, they briefly look at her. There is a sense of respect with which everyone in the room looks at her. She is aware of this dynamic. She stands with confidence and leans a hand against a chair. Making eye contact with the staff member as she speaks. The staff member nods as she speaks acknowledging her. The other staff member carefully pitches in but does so carefully. She comments and waits for Cristina to grant her permission to further contribute to the conversation. The discussion is serious. However, Cristina adjusts her tone from time to time to add a sense of lightness while maintaining authority in the exchange. The staff members respond to this by smiling shyly.'</i> <b>(Field Notes - Cristina, 40 years old, Sinhala, Founder of a salon)</b></li> <li>• <i>'The interactions between the chef, accounts manager and herself indicate that all three parties are comfortable with each other but there is a distinct degree of respect that the two older men have towards her in how they</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Controlling Interactions</b></p>	<p><b>Projected Image</b></p>

<p>maintain the physical distance and the tone they use. She uses the phone as a prop indicating that she is in the process of planning the inventory orders. The phone acts as a cue to the audience that she is busy.' <b>(Field Notes – Hashani, 35 years old, Sinhala, Founder of a cafe)</b></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'It's different behaviours that our customers show us and there are some customers who are extremely professional about their choices and yeah, but, we can't change their behaviour, our professional behaviour I think has to be consistent. Just because you are talking to someone who's untrue or crass who is used to get in their business doesn't mean we have to lower our standards and you know, because I think the expected standards for me are much higher, so I have to upkeep that.' <b>(Interview - Fayasa, 38 years old, Sri Lankan Moor, Founder of baby clothing business and an ethnic clothing business)</b></li> <li>• 'If I consider the people that I associate, when I say I make cakes, I say that I am a cake designer. I don't say I make cakes because then it will sound like they can buy 500g cakes from me like from bakeries. I say that I am a designer and the name of my business also sounds like that... So, when I say cake designer, people believe that it is something not everyone can do.' <b>(Interview - Upeksha, 28 years old, Sinhalese, founder-home baker)</b></li> <li>• 'When we face difficulties, we shouldn't tell all our difficulties we need to bottle them ourselves. Why should we tell the others? Sometimes we can't let others know what we are facing. Sometimes we cannot afford to eat curry, we can only eat the rice that day with come coconut. I will somehow feed the children with what I have. But if anyone comes and asks me what I made I won't tell them that we are struggling. I will tell them we had fish and curry. I will not share with them the reality...' <b>(Interview - Bhavani, 65 years old, Sri Lankan Tamil, Founder-fish vendor)</b></li> <li>• 'Yeah so like I said I honestly don't know how I got through it! Because there would be nights when you know I had clients on the phone and I'm breastfeeding [she laughs]! And of course they didn't know that I was breastfeeding. But you know I'll be like... Yeah I'll send it to you! I'll send it to you! Don't worry! And then I worked through the night and you know. So, it kind of took a lot but I think it's also a part of the journey you know. It's sort</li> </ul>	<p><b>Her Persona</b></p>	

<p>of solidifies. I... I don't think you can do something like that unless you're really passionate about what you want to do when your commitment to what you're doing you know.' <b>(Interview - Hafeeza, 44 years old, Sri Lankan Moor, Founder of an IT company)</b></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Yes I think as a woman entrepreneur, you have to always be concerned about your appearance. People judge you from that. Even a customer when they come, they look at you and, they will in this Sri Lanka, if you represent yourself perfectly, they will listen to you. That's what I think. They will even get an advice from you, in my trade it's really important I think, the way you present yourself. So, that's what I think.' <b>(Interview - Roshani, 31 years old, Sinhala, Founder of a womenswear boutique)</b></li> <li>• '... if there is an exhibition, I wear those creations. Almost all the cloths have a piece of lace. Every product has a piece of lace. Even the brick I keep for the door, I take a cloth bag and make a cover with lace. Then the towel, in the hand cloth I have stitched a lace even the tissue box! and I have added lace is almost everything with the hope of selling more.' <b>(Interview - Chandramali, 67 years old, Sinhala, Founder of a traditional lace making social enterprise)</b></li> <li>• 'Yeah, again going back to Radhawatunna [she smiles]. I would try to dress in the shabbiest clothes ever. Because eventually I found out that somebody brought to my attention that they are judging you based on this and this and that. So, the only thing I could do is, for example I would come a certain distance in my car and then I took a tuk tuk [she laughs] while being dressed in the shabbiest clothes ever. Now I also had to hide my accent although I think in the process of trying to hide my accent I would have done a clumsier job of it...' <b>(Interview - Nethmi, 36 years old, founder of a designer label)</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Keeping up appearances</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Sanity is maintained by keeping separate roles and picking my battles.' <b>(Interview - Dinusha, 33 years old, Sinhala, Founder of a events company and bespoke packaging company, second generation owner of a construction company)</b></li> <li>• '... when I go to work nobody really sees me as an entrepreneur. Everybody sees me as only a Lecturer. I try to keep the two things separate. I think that really helps. But, yes, the perceptions will always be there. May be people at work might perceive if I try to focus on the business too much or if I'm seen</li> </ul>	<p><b>Managing Roles</b></p>	

<p>too much to be promoting the business, then they might think ah, what is her real interest? You have to be a bit careful though, you can't promote your business during your work hours. That's a no-no! But that's an unethical thing also. So, if you are careful, if you are careful in maintaining your profession, if you are serious about it, then I think your other profession doesn't matter. It shouldn't really have a conflict.' <b>(Interview - Fayasa, 38 years old, Sri Lankan Moor, Founder of baby clothing business and an ethnic clothing business)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Yes, to an extent, that probably people who see my two sides might not even recognise me anymore. [She laughs] But, I'm actually a very timid person; laughing, joking, very, very, very soft as a person; but I switch roles entirely when I come to work. I put on this face of this responsible entrepreneur actually.' <b>(Interview - Imesha, 31 years old, Sinhala, founder of a speech therapy clinic)</b></li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'So, if there are like any items that need to be brought down. I will take one and come. I won't come just. I will be part of that. And even in the workshop I don't serve the customers and I said [she laughs] I'm not a social person. I don't handle people well. So, I... I'm on the back. So, if you do with the washing I would for five minutes they would grab a plate and say 'madame! what are you doing?' I say no I want to be here, I wanted be part of my business. And I want to be part of what they are doing.' <b>(Interview - Hashani, 35 years old, Sinhala, founder of a cafe)</b></li> <li>• ' So, when I wake up in the morning at around 4. Most of the time I actually spend some time watching different videos. I love to see different speeches, what different people are talking about... So, then I have to make my daughters food and everything. Then... thats when I step into the role of mother. So, then I quickly take her to her play group and I drop her off there, and then after that I drop off my husband at his office and then I'm coming to office... I come in and quickly open my emails and answering all the questions. These communications are mostly with vendors. So, it's like here I have to be a leader [she laughs]... At the beginning its very hard with my daughter. She is always coming and sitting on my lap, trying to actually get</li> </ul>	<p><b>Separating roles based on appearance /Space</b></p>	

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4 my computer out, and then my pen out, you know that's how it works. So,  
5 now she is a bit okay, she is hanging around and playing there outside. So, at  
6 that time I can actually focus on my work. Still you know I have to continue  
7 my work. My daughter is actually observing me now. I really wanted to keep  
8 my daughter with me. Closer to me, to show her how we have to work. I  
9 really need to bring her up in a forward environment to see how you know  
10 things are actually moving.' **(Interview - Pawani, 33 years old, Sinhala,**  
11 **Founder of a social enterprise marketplace)**  
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Table 8 Illustrative quotes, themes, and dimensions – Space as an extension of her entrepreneurial persona

First Order Codes and illustrative quotes	Second Order Codes	Aggregate Codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'when I am there, even the culture I want to make it the way that it's pleasant for everybody. So, that's why I said please don't talk in that way... That's not the way I talk. Also I don't want to fall into that category. Because I kind of found out that initially that even my language started changing unknowingly. It's like you know it's hard to.... Because you are in here 24/7 most a time. So, [she laughs] your language also changes. So, then I thought to myself. No I don't want to do that. Plus it's nice if they also talk like that. But I told them I know you are boy's and men and whatever, at your own free time... Yes, You can do that. But if it's to do with your like work wise, you have to talk in a way that it won't hurt the other person. Because sometimes they mix up the language. So, some person will think it's... It offends them. So, that's why I thought, no it's civil to talk in a nice way. So, I talk to all parties the same.'</i> <b>(Interview - Hashani, 35 years old, Sinhala, founder of a café)</b></li> <li>• <i>'The first training we give the staff is on how to welcome the people who come to our organization and how to treat them well.'</i> <b>(Interview - Gajani, 45 years old, Sri Lankan Tamil, Founder of a social enterprise marketplace)</b></li> <li>• <i>'Of course! Yes! Because I have certificates, I have those on display... They trust my work and they come. They don't refer to the certificates. But actually, we should be able to portray that the confidence in the clients to show that we, we are capable of doing this. And you can trust that product. So, that is very important. If you take your core business, which is a Salon. Running a salon is a bit more than just a haircut. I mean you're dealing with people you're dealing with one of the most important parts of their lives which is their outward appearance. Which they present to everyone.'</i> <b>(Interview - Amanda, 60 years old, Sinhalese, founder of a salon)</b></li> <li>• <i>'If I get a call saying that tourists are on their way get ready, I get some pillows from nearby and quickly make the set up by putting some lace on the</i></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Designing the space</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Space as an extension of her entrepreneurial persona</b></p>



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<p>table as if I am creating an illusion and show them. Earlier it was there like in the book I gave you, but now we quickly arrange and show.’ <b>(Interview - Chandramali, 67 years old, Sinhala, Founder of a traditional lace making social enterprise)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ‘I mean it always pays to be more central. I mean I was privileged enough to come across it without having to look for it. But yeah, it works both ways. And whenever I have a Travel Line meeting, I take my dad’s office. They have like a conference room which I rent out for that kind of space.’ <b>(Interview - Dinithi, 33 years old, Sinhala, Founder of a travel company and tutoring service)</b></li></ul>		
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