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## HOW MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS INFLUENCE WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS' IDENTITY: EVIDENCE FROM THE TANZANIAN PRESS (SUMMARY)

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## ≈ SUMMARY ≈

**HOW MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS INFLUENCE  
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS' IDENTITY: EVIDENCE  
FROM THE TANZANIAN PRESS**

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**Principal Topic**

The global recognition of the economic importance of women entrepreneurship (Brush, de Bruin & Welter, 2009) has resulted in various initiatives to promote women's entrepreneurial activities worldwide. In Tanzania, women are viewed as playing a key role in economic development, resulting in various government initiatives aimed at increasing their participation in the private sector (Nkirina, 2010). However, as in many societies where women go against cultural values and attitudes to become entrepreneurs (Carter, Marlow & Bennett, 2012), the patriarchal attitudes in Tanzanian society continue to subordinate women's societal position, and create obstacles for women entrepreneurs (Ellis et al, 2007; Moori, 2014). The socio-cultural context contributes to the construction of entrepreneurial identities by providing cues that either enhance one's sense of belonging, or that create conflicts with the newly acquired identity (Donnellon, Ollila & Middleton, 2014). Societal perceptions can therefore be viewed as contributing to women's entrepreneurial identities. One way of determining these perceptions is by analyzing media representations and discourses about women entrepreneurs. Building on previous research on media representations, this paper contributes to our understanding of how the representation of women entrepreneurs in Tanzanian press contributes to their entrepreneurial identities.

**Method**

A total of 203 relevant online articles were identified (131 articles in English and 72 articles in Kiswahili), and these consisted of articles from both government- and private-owned newspapers in Tanzania. A qualitative analysis was carried out to determine the media discourses and representations of women entrepreneurs.

**Results and Implications**

The majority of articles were positively framed, and they focused on initiatives aimed at promoting women entrepreneurship, rather than on women entrepreneurs' narratives. Media articles focused on women entrepreneurs portrayed them as having multiple identities that were often linked to societal expectations of their social roles. In addition, the discourses on empowerment, patriarchy, and femininity, continued to primarily weaken women's societal legitimacy, even though opposing discourses were also presented. On the other hand, media's portrayal of entrepreneurship as accessible to a diverse group of women of different ages and walks of life positively influenced the desirability of entrepreneurial activities. However, this influence is minimized due to the limited focus of articles on women entrepreneurs' narratives.

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