


Chapter 11


Breaking Barriers in Precision: The Entrepreneurial Journey of Marta Cantabrana

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ABSTRACT

Women entrepreneurs in Latin America face barriers, particularly in high-skill technical sectors where female participation remains limited. This chapter examines the entrepreneurial trajectory of Marta Cantabrana, a Spanish immigrant who founded and developed 3CMetrology Mexico. Employing a case study methodology, the research draws on two individual interviews with Marta and a group session with four team members. These were structured around three thematic axes: the industry and women's inclusion; commercial strategy and its relevance in women's entrepreneurship; and, finally, Marta's leadership style within this context. Findings reveal an intersectional legitimacy-building process shaped by gender, nationality, and technical expertise gaps, evolving from overcompensation through technical learning to the establishment of organizational systems that transcend individual

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credibility. The case challenges traditional assumptions around technical entrepreneurship requires formal technical credentials or capital-intensive innovation, demonstrating alternative pathways.

INTRODUCTION

To better understand how legitimacy is constructed by women entrepreneurs operating in male-dominated technical sectors, this chapter draws on the case of Marta Cantabrana and 3CMetrology to identify key themes that emerged through qualitative analysis. These themes reflect the multi-layered challenges and strategies women must navigate to gain institutional recognition, build sustainable businesses, and create organizational cultures grounded in trust, values, and innovation. Drawing from interview data and guided by an intersectionality-legitimacy framework, the following sections present the findings organized into four core thematic areas: leadership style and values, legitimacy construction, strategic partnerships and business model innovation, and gendered positioning within technical sectors.

General Context

Women entrepreneurs across Latin America operate within ecosystems shaped by structural inequalities, patriarchal cultural norms, and institutional barriers that limit their access to resources, decision-making spaces, and legitimacy—especially in male-dominated and technical sectors. This section offers a contextual overview of the entrepreneurial landscape in Latin America and Mexico, highlighting the challenges that women face, including systemic discrimination, restricted financial access, and social expectations. It also addresses the diversity of motivations behind women’s entrepreneurial participation, the resilience they exhibit, and the persistent gaps in scholarly attention to success cases in high-tech industries. Against this backdrop, the case of Marta Cantabrana becomes a critical site of analysis for understanding how women build legitimacy and sustainable businesses under complex, intersectional constraints.

Persistent Structural Challenges in Female Entrepreneurship

Women entrepreneurs in Latin America face significant structural challenges when establishing and growing businesses, particularly in technical fields where female representation remains disproportionately low (Bullough et al., 2021). The development of women’s entrepreneurship in the region lags behind that of other areas, such as Europe and Asia. Due to the economic conditions typical of emerging

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