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Resource Strategies and Sustainability: A Study of Women Cultural Entrepreneurs in Central Uganda.

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Abstract

This study investigates the interplay between cultural heritage and commercial enterprise for women entrepreneurs in Central Uganda, a region with one of the world's highest rates of female self-employment. Despite their significant socioeconomic contributions, these women-led businesses often operate at a marginal level, facing institutional barriers and a 'cultural resource paradox' that complicates the balance between authenticity and commercialization. Addressing a notable gap in the literature, this research explores how these entrepreneurs leverage tangible and intangible resources to sustain their businesses while preserving cultural identity.

Employing a qualitative, multi-case study approach, we conducted remote semi-structured interviews with Ugandan women cultural entrepreneurs. Thematic analysis of their narratives reveals that traditional knowledge, specialized crafting skills, and robust social networks are critical intangible resources. These assets are vital for enhancing business resilience and maintaining cultural authenticity amidst commercial pressures.

Our findings provide empirical support for the Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory in this unique context. The study offers practical insights for policymakers to design initiatives that foster women's economic empowerment and heritage preservation, in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords:

Women entrepreneurship, Cultural entrepreneurship, Resource mobilization, social capital, Cultural authenticity, Business sustainability, Uganda.

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To the women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda who generously shared their invaluable time, experiences, and profound insights, we offer our sincere thanks. Without your candid participation and trust, this thesis would not have been possible. Your stories are at the heart of this research, and we are privileged to have learned from you.

Lastly, we must thank our research group. The spirit of collaboration within our team was vital, and this thesis is a reflection of that shared effort and mutual support. Every part of this project has been shaped by our joint commitment to conducting thorough, ethical research and our collective drive to explore new ideas.

The Master students: **John Africa Ssenyonga, Peteroy Waithaka, Rishna Katupitiya**

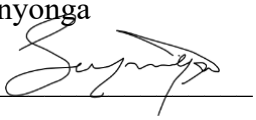
Linnaeus University

Declaration of Authorship

We, the undersigned, hereby certify that this master's thesis entitled *"Ugandan Women's Cultural Entrepreneurship: Resources for Authenticity and Sustainability"* is our own original work and has been jointly prepared by the group. All sources used in this research have been acknowledged and properly cited in accordance with the

guidelines of the 7th edition of APA. This thesis has not, in whole or in part, been submitted for any other degree or qualification at Linnaeus University or any other academic institution. We confirm that all parts of this submitted thesis are entirely written by us, the group members, and that it does not contain any unnecessary content. We share joint responsibility for upholding academic integrity throughout this research process.

John Africa Ssenyonga

Signature: 

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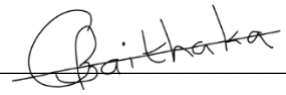
Signature: 

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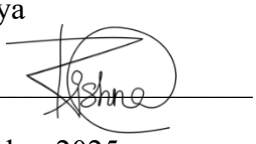
Signature: 

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Dedication

This group thesis is dedicated to the resilient and innovative women cultural entrepreneurs of central Uganda, whose passion for their heritage and unwavering determination open new pathways toward sustainable development. Our research group's stories explore the profound power of culture in shaping entrepreneurial success and fostering community well-being.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Entrepreneurship plays a key role in economic growth, job creation, and social change, especially in contexts where formal employment opportunities are limited (Kimmitt et al., 2020; Vieitez-Cerdeño et al., 2023). In many developing countries, people turn to entrepreneurship not only to earn income, but also as a way to reduce poverty, strengthen social inclusion, and cope with structural and economic challenges (Rizvi et al., 2024). Sub-Saharan Africa stands out for having some of the highest rates of entrepreneurial activity globally, driven by both opportunity and necessity (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor [GEM], 2017).

Uganda is a clear example of this pattern. Estimates suggest that between 52% and 76% of the working population is self-employed, with women making up a disproportionately large share of this group (World Bank, 2019; Vieitez-Cerdeño et al., 2023). In fact, more than 80% of women in Uganda are reported to be self-employed, placing the country among those with the highest levels of women's entrepreneurial participation in Africa (World Bank, 2019). Women's businesses therefore play an important role in supporting household incomes, sustaining community livelihoods, and contributing to broader socioeconomic stability (Najjinda et al., 2025).

Despite this high level of participation, most women-owned businesses in Uganda remain small, informal, and limited in their ability to grow. Women entrepreneurs continue to face structural barriers such as restricted access to finance, limited institutional support, unequal divisions of labour, and sociocultural expectations linked to gender roles (Aterido et al., 2013; Lakuma et al., 2019; Monteith & Camfield, 2019). As a result, many women's enterprises focus on short-term survival rather than long-term growth or value creation.

Within this broader entrepreneurial landscape, cultural entrepreneurship represents a distinctive but still underexplored area. Cultural entrepreneurship refers to business activities based on cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and creative practices, often combining economic goals with the preservation and transmission of cultural identity (Meissner, 2021). In Uganda, this includes activities such as bark cloth production, basket weaving, pottery, traditional textiles, and performance arts, all of which carry strong social and symbolic meaning within local communities (Kabeer, 1999).

Cultural businesses are more than just income-generating activities. They are deeply embedded in community values, social relationships, and historical traditions. To survive, cultural entrepreneurs must maintain cultural authenticity while also responding to market demands and commercial pressures (Hoffman & Ventresca, 2002; Meissner, 2021). This creates a central tension within cultural entrepreneurship: the need to commercialise cultural practices to sustain livelihoods while preserving the cultural meanings that give those practices their value (Bullough et al., 2022; Najjinda et al., 2025). This study focuses on how women cultural entrepreneurs in Uganda navigate this balance.

While previous research has highlighted the importance of women's entrepreneurship in Uganda, much of the literature has focused either on general entrepreneurial activity or on the barriers women face. Far less attention has been given to women working within cultural industries, where intangible resources such as traditional knowledge, social networks, and cultural legitimacy play a central role in shaping business practices and outcomes (Kuhar & Shanmugasundaram, 2022). As a result, there is still limited understanding of how women cultural entrepreneurs mobilise resources and sustain their enterprises in culturally embedded and resource-constrained environments.

By examining women's cultural entrepreneurship in Central Uganda, this study places these enterprises within the wider context of entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa. It views entrepreneurship not only as an economic activity but also as a socially and culturally embedded practice shaped by gender relations, informal institutions, and local value systems. This perspective provides a foundation for understanding how

women cultural entrepreneurs navigate the interconnected challenges of resource mobilisation, business sustainability, and cultural authenticity.

1.2 Cultural Entrepreneurship and Resource Mobilisation

Cultural entrepreneurship means building businesses that grow out of cultural heritage, traditional skills, and creative expression. These businesses look for ways to earn income and support people's livelihoods, but they also work to keep cultural identity strong (Meissner, 2021). Unlike other forms of entrepreneurship that focus mainly on profit or innovation, cultural entrepreneurship tries to balance making a living with preserving what makes a community unique (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). Cultural entrepreneurs create value not just through their products or services, but through the meaning and authenticity that come with them.

In many places across the Global South, cultural entrepreneurship supports local economies and helps keep cultural traditions alive, even when those traditions are hard to measure or see. Crafts, textiles, performances, and rituals all carry meanings rooted in community history and beliefs (Venkatraman et al., 2020). However these businesses in emerging economies relies heavily on informal institutions, social ties, and community-based norms (Khavul et al., 2009). To truly understand cultural entrepreneurship, we need to pay attention to the social and cultural context where it takes place.

A big part of cultural entrepreneurship is knowing how to find and use resources. Entrepreneurs have to look at what they already have, think about how to get more, and decide how to use these resources to keep their businesses running (Xie, 2021). Some resources are tangible, like money, materials, or equipment. Others are intangible, like skills, knowledge, reputation, or trust within the community (Barney, 1991; Mahoney & Pandian, 1992; Hall, 1992; Marshall et al., 2020). Both kinds matter for success.

Intangible resources are especially important in cultural entrepreneurship. Traditional knowledge, family skills, storytelling, and cultural symbols all help make products feel authentic and valuable (Meissner, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). These resources are often unique to each community and are not easy for others to copy. This gives cultural businesses an edge over mass-produced goods (Venkatraman et al., 2020).

Tangible resources, such as materials, tools, workspace, and money, also matter for cultural businesses. Access to these resources shapes how well entrepreneurs can operate and grow their enterprises (Aterido et al., 2013; Lakuma et al., 2019). In Uganda, for example, women entrepreneurs often cannot access loans or formal support and therefore rely more on informal funding and help from their communities (Najjinda et al., 2025). This makes it even more important to use intangible resources well.

A further defining feature of cultural entrepreneurship is the centrality of cultural authenticity. Cultural authenticity refers to the perceived alignment between a product or service and the traditions, values, and practices from which it originates (Hoffman & Ventresca, 2002). Authenticity is not a fixed or purely objective attribute but is socially constructed and negotiated among producers, communities, and consumers (Meissner, 2021). For cultural entrepreneurs, maintaining authenticity is often essential for legitimacy within their communities and for differentiation in cultural markets. At the same time, pressures to adapt products for wider or commercial markets can create tensions between preserving tradition and ensuring economic viability, a challenge commonly described as the "cultural resource paradox" (Hoffman & Ventresca, 2002).

Sustainability in cultural entrepreneurship is not just about earning money. It is about building businesses that last, support people, and protect cultural traditions for the future (UNESCO, 2022). If a business loses its cultural authenticity, it can lose its value. If it does not make enough money, the cultural practices behind it may not survive.

Taken together, cultural entrepreneurship can be understood as a form of entrepreneurial activity in which resource mobilisation, cultural authenticity, and sustainability are deeply interconnected. Entrepreneurs must continuously negotiate how tangible and intangible resources are accessed and deployed in ways that support both economic survival and cultural integrity. This conceptual grounding provides an essential foundation for examining how women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda navigate these dynamics within environments shaped by gendered constraints, informality, and strong social ties.

1.3 Women Cultural Entrepreneurs in Uganda: Contextual Narrowing

Uganda is a useful place to look at women's cultural entrepreneurship because it brings together high rates of women starting businesses, strong cultural traditions, and not much formal support from institutions. Many women in Uganda are self-employed, and for most, entrepreneurship is a way to make a living, not just a career choice (World Bank, 2019; Vieitez-Cerdeño et al., 2023). Women's entrepreneurship in Uganda is predominantly informal and embedded in social and cultural norms (Lakwo, 2006).

Cultural entrepreneurship in Uganda encompasses a wide range of activities, such as bark cloth production, basketry, pottery, traditional textiles, performance arts, herbal medicine, and ritual services. These enterprises are often embedded within community structures and family networks, and they rely heavily on locally transmitted knowledge and practices (UNESCO, 2022; Venkatraman et al., 2020). In many cases, women act as primary custodians of this cultural knowledge, responsible for both its economic utilisation and its preservation across generations (Najjinda et al., 2025).

However, women running cultural businesses in Uganda face a lot of challenges. They often do not have good access to loans, legal help, infrastructure, or bigger markets, especially if they lead the business (Aterido et al., 2013; Lakuma et al., 2019). Because of this, many rely on savings groups, help from family, and sharing resources in their communities to keep their businesses going (Najjinda et al., 2025). These methods can help them adapt, but they also make it hard to grow and can leave women open to risk.

Gendered norms and social expectations further shape women's entrepreneurial experiences in Uganda. Research consistently shows that women face disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work, household management, and community obligations, which limits the time, mobility, and resources they can devote to business activities (Monteith & Camfield, 2019; Bullough et al., 2022). These constraints are particularly pronounced in cultural entrepreneurship, where production processes may be time-intensive and closely tied to social and ritual calendars. Women's entrepreneurial decisions are therefore often made within complex negotiations between economic necessity, cultural responsibility, and social legitimacy.

However, women in these businesses are not just reacting to problems. They use their social networks, family ties, and trust in their communities to find resources, reach customers, and keep their businesses running even when things are tough (Akintimehin et al., 2019). These connections help them get information, support, and sometimes money when formal systems are not available (Brogan & Dooley, 2024). Community approval is also important, since it often decides if their cultural products are seen as real and valuable.

Despite the growing recognition of women's entrepreneurship in Uganda, existing research has largely treated women entrepreneurs as a homogeneous group or focused on conventional business sectors such as trade, agriculture, or services (Orobia et al., 2020; Najjinda et al., 2025). Comparatively little empirical attention has been paid to women operating within cultural industries, where economic activity is deeply intertwined with cultural meaning and social obligation. In particular, there remains limited understanding of how women cultural entrepreneurs navigate the dual pressures of sustaining livelihoods and preserving cultural authenticity within resource-constrained and gendered environments (Kuhar & Shanmugasundaram, 2022).

This study looks closely at women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda, where business, culture, and gender come together in unique ways. To understand how these women keep their businesses going, we need to look at both economic issues and the cultural and social systems that shape what they do. This background is important for explaining the research problem and showing what we still need to learn.

1.4 Problem Statement and Research Gap

Over the last twenty years, there has been much more research on women's entrepreneurship, especially in developing countries. Studies show that women entrepreneurs are important for creating jobs, earning income, and helping their households cope with challenges. However, they often face gender inequality, weak institutions, and not enough resources (Aterido et al., 2013; Monteith & Camfield, 2019; Najjinda et al., 2025). In Sub-Saharan Africa and Uganda, women's businesses are often held back by lack of access to finance, heavy unpaid care work, and social norms that limit their freedom and choices (Bullough et al., 2022; Lakuma et al., 2019).

At the same time, research on cultural entrepreneurship has highlighted the distinctive nature of enterprises rooted in cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and creative practices. Scholars have emphasised that cultural entrepreneurs operate at the intersection of economic activity and cultural preservation, where value creation depends not only on market performance but also on maintaining cultural authenticity and legitimacy (Hoffman & Ventresca, 2002; Meissner, 2021). Studies in this field have introduced important concepts such as the "cultural resource paradox," referring to the tension between adapting cultural products for commercial markets and preserving their traditional meaning and integrity (Hoffman & Ventresca, 2002; Venkatraman et al., 2020).

Even with more research, there are still important gaps. Most studies on women's entrepreneurship in Uganda and similar places focus on general businesses like trade or farming, not on cultural industries. This means we know little about the unique challenges and opportunities for women working in businesses tied to culture (Orobia et al., 2020; Najjinda et al., 2025). Often, cultural entrepreneurship is either grouped with creative industries or looked at separately from women's real experiences, so we do not fully understand how women manage in this area.

Another gap is that most research looks at resources as mainly money or physical things. Some newer studies mention social networks, skills, and knowledge, but they rarely connect these to keeping culture authentic or producing heritage-based goods (Akintimehin et al., 2019; Kuhar & Shanmugasundaram, 2022). This is a big gap, especially in African settings where community ties and informal rules are very important for how businesses work.

There is also not much research on how women in cultural businesses use both physical and non-physical resources to keep their businesses going and protect their culture. Theories like the Resource-Based View talk about how special resources can help a business succeed, but they often miss how people actually get and use these resources in real life, especially in informal settings (Barney, 1991; Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). Social Capital Theory talks about networks and trust, but does not explain how these help cultural businesses last over time (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000; Dal Mas & Paoloni, 2020). Because of this, we still do not know how women in cultural enterprises deal with limited resources, market demands, and cultural expectations.

Finally, empirical research on cultural entrepreneurship has been disproportionately concentrated in Western or formal creative industries, with relatively few studies examining African contexts where entrepreneurship is deeply embedded in kinship structures, community norms, and informal economies (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019; Meissner, 2021). In Uganda, and particularly in Central Uganda, there is a scarcity of qualitative, context-sensitive research that foregrounds the lived experiences of women cultural entrepreneurs and their strategies for balancing economic sustainability with cultural preservation (Kuhar & Shanmugasundaram, 2022).

All these gaps show that we need research that looks closely at the real situations of women running cultural businesses in places with few resources. We do not know enough about how women in Central Uganda use different resources, how their social networks and cultural standing affect their work, or how they balance making money with keeping their culture strong. Filling this gap will help us better understand women's cultural entrepreneurship and improve both research and practice in this area.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

This study looks at how women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda find and use both physical and non-physical resources to keep their businesses going and stay true to their culture. By focusing on women working in settings shaped by tradition and limited resources, the study aims to show how they balance making a living with preserving their culture.

The study uses interviews and stories from women cultural entrepreneurs to better understand how they gather resources. It looks at the role of social networks, passed-down knowledge, and support from their communities, as well as the challenges of limited money and materials. This research helps fill gaps in what we know about women's entrepreneurship and cultural businesses in the Global South, and shows how these businesses last over time.

1.6 Research Question

After reviewing the research background and identifying what is missing in the current literature, we have shaped this study around the following main research question:

How do women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda mobilise tangible and intangible resources to sustain their businesses without compromising cultural authenticity?

This research question is designed to capture the complex and interconnected processes through which women cultural entrepreneurs operate within resource-constrained and culturally embedded environments. It reflects the study's focus on resource mobilisation, business sustainability, and cultural authenticity, while allowing for an in-depth exploration of women's lived entrepreneurial experiences. The question is addressed through qualitative inquiry, enabling the examination of how economic practices are shaped by social relations, inherited knowledge, and community legitimacy within the specific context of Central Uganda.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is important for both researchers and practitioners because it looks at how women's entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurship, and resource mobilisation come together in the Global South. By focusing on women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda, the research offers practical insights that add to what we know, while staying within the scope of a Master's thesis.

1.7.1 Academic Significance

This study adds to research on women's entrepreneurship by looking past general categories and focusing on a specific, culturally rooted sector. While many studies have covered the challenges women face in developing economies, there is less research on how women in cultural industries actually find and use resources to keep their businesses going (Kuhar & Shanmugasundaram, 2022; Najjinda et al., 2025). By highlighting cultural entrepreneurship as its own area, this study brings more detail to discussions about gender, entrepreneurship, and informality.

This study also adds to research on cultural entrepreneurship by sharing evidence from Africa, a region that is not often covered in the literature. Most research on cultural and creative industries looks at Western or formal settings and often misses places where entrepreneurship is tied to family, informal rules, and community trust

(Meissner, 2021; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019). By studying women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda, this research shows how cultural authenticity and making a living are closely linked.

Theoretically, the study offers value by applying and integrating the Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory within a culturally grounded entrepreneurial context. While Resource Based View (RBV) has been widely used to explain competitive advantage through unique resources, it has been criticised for underemphasising the relational processes through which resources are accessed and sustained, particularly in informal economies (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). By combining RBV with Social Capital Theory, this study contributes to a more relational and context-sensitive understanding of resource mobilisation, highlighting how intangible cultural assets and social networks interact to support enterprise sustainability. Although not seeking to develop new theory, the study refines existing theoretical perspectives through empirical application.

1.7.2 Practical and Policy Significance

This study is not just an academic exercise, its findings matter for policymakers, development workers, and women cultural entrepreneurs. By showing how women use both tangible and intangible resources even when formal support is limited, the research offers practical ideas for designing support programs that actually fit the needs of culturally rooted businesses (Barney, 1991). The results highlight firm resources that are socially complex and hard to imitate can create sustained competitive advantage.

For policymakers and development organisations in Uganda, the study highlights the need for entrepreneurship support mechanisms that extend beyond financial capital alone. Programmes aimed at women's economic empowerment, such as microfinance initiatives or skills development schemes, benefit from incorporating culturally sensitive approaches that acknowledge women's dual roles as entrepreneurs and custodians of cultural heritage (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2022; Nsereko et al., 2018). However, the study does not claim to directly shape policy, it offers empirically grounded insights that can inform policy discussions related to gender equality, sustainable livelihoods, and cultural preservation.

Women cultural entrepreneurs can use this study to reflect on ways to keep their businesses going while staying true to their cultural roots. By sharing real examples of how women adapt and mobilise resources, the research can help others learn from each other and push for greater institutional recognition of cultural enterprises as viable economic activities. More broadly, the study shows that cultural entrepreneurship can support economic participation while keeping cultural traditions alive at the same time.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

We have set clear boundaries for this study to keep the analysis focused and manageable for a Master's thesis. These choices are intentional and reflect the direction we want the research to take, not any shortcomings in the approach.

First, we focus on Central Uganda for this study. Although women cultural entrepreneurs work in many parts of Uganda and Sub-Saharan Africa, we chose Central Uganda because it has many cultural enterprises and fits the research goals. The findings are specific to this context and are not meant to apply to other regions or countries.

Second, the study is delimited to women cultural entrepreneurs. Male entrepreneurs and women operating in non-cultural sectors are excluded from the analysis. This focus enables a more in-depth examination of gendered entrepreneurial experiences within culturally embedded enterprises, where women often act as custodians of traditional knowledge and heritage-based practices.

Third, the study focuses specifically on cultural entrepreneurship activities rooted in heritage-based production and services, such as traditional crafts, textiles, performance, and related cultural practices. Cultural enterprises operating purely within contemporary creative industries without a strong heritage component fall outside the scope of this research.

Fourth, the analytical focus of the study is delimited to resource mobilisation processes, business sustainability, and the preservation of cultural authenticity. While other aspects of entrepreneurship such as innovation, scaling strategies, or macroeconomic impact, may emerge in the empirical material, they are not examined as primary analytical dimensions.

Finally, We use a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews. This method lets me go deeper into the context rather than aiming for broad, statistical results. The goal is to add to theory and provide insight into the specific context, not to make general claims about cause and effect.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured into seven chapters, each contributing to a systematic examination of women's cultural entrepreneurship in Central Uganda.

Chapter 1 introduces the study by providing the research background, conceptual grounding, problem statement, research purpose and question, significance of the study, and delimitations. It establishes the foundation for the research and outlines the scope and direction of the thesis.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review, which critically examines existing scholarship on women's entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurship, resource mobilisation, and social capital, with particular attention to studies conducted in Uganda, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Global South. The chapter identifies key debates and gaps in the literature that inform the study's analytical focus.

Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical framework guiding the research. It introduces the Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory and explains how these perspectives are integrated to analyse resource mobilisation, sustainability, and cultural authenticity within culturally embedded entrepreneurial contexts.

Chapter 4 details the research methodology. It explains the philosophical assumptions, research design, data collection methods, sampling strategy, ethical considerations, and analytical approach employed to address the research question.

Chapter 5 presents the empirical findings of the study. Drawing on qualitative interview data, the chapter describes key themes related to resource mobilisation strategies, social networks, sustainability practices, and challenges faced by women cultural entrepreneurs.

Chapter 6 provides the analysis and discussion of the findings. The empirical material is interpreted through the lens of the theoretical framework and situated within existing literature to address the research question and highlight key insights.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by summarising the main findings, discussing their theoretical and practical implications, acknowledging study limitations, and suggesting directions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews what researchers have said about women's entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurship, resource mobilization, and social capital, especially in Uganda and Sub-Saharan Africa. The aim is to summarize the main ideas and theories, and to point out what is still unknown or missing. By looking at both global and local studies, this review sets up the research questions and the approach for this project.

2.1 Women's Entrepreneurship in the Global South

Women's entrepreneurship has increasingly been positioned as a critical driver of economic development, poverty reduction, and social transformation in the Global South. International organisations and policy-oriented research often portray women entrepreneurs as agents of empowerment whose economic participation contributes to household welfare, employment creation, and inclusive growth (Minniti, 2009, Foundations and Trends in Entrepreneurship; World Bank, 2012 policy report). From this perspective, entrepreneurship is framed as an opportunity-driven pathway through which women gain financial independence, enhance agency, and challenge gender inequalities embedded in labour markets.

However, some researchers question whether women's entrepreneurship in developing countries is really about empowerment. Studies show that many women in the Global South start businesses out of necessity, not because they see a good opportunity (Minniti, 2009; Mead & Liedholm, 1998). Often, women turn to self-employment because they cannot find formal jobs or social support. This means many women-owned businesses stay small and informal and do not always lead to better economic situations (Mead & Liedholm, 1998).

This debate about empowerment versus insecurity is central in feminist research on entrepreneurship. Mainstream studies often focus on personal traits and risk-taking,

but feminist scholars say this ignores the bigger picture (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). In the Global South, women often face social systems that limit their access to resources, time, and decision-making (Kabeer, 1999). Household duties and traditional gender roles also make it harder for women to grow or formalize their businesses, even if they have the skills and motivation (Kabeer, 1999).

However, Feminist researchers also point out that time is an important resource for entrepreneurs, and it is not shared equally. Women in the Global South often have less time for their businesses because they do most of the unpaid care work at home (Kabeer, 1999; Minniti, 2009). These time limits are not just personal problems, but come from family expectations about gender roles. This affects how much women can grow and sustain their businesses.

Relational and contextual approaches further highlight that women's entrepreneurship cannot be understood in isolation from family, community, and institutional environments. Brush et al. (2009) propose a gender-aware framework that situates women's entrepreneurial activity within interrelated social contexts, emphasising that access to resources is mediated by social relationships rather than purely market mechanisms. Similarly, Jamali (2009) demonstrates that women entrepreneurs in developing countries often rely heavily on informal networks and family ties, which can simultaneously enable business survival and reinforce dependency, obligation, and vulnerability. These findings complicate linear narratives of empowerment by illustrating how entrepreneurship may reproduce gendered inequalities even as it provides income-generating opportunities.

However, researchers warn against seeing women entrepreneurs only as victims of their circumstances. Even though social systems shape their options, women also find ways to use what they have and adapt to their situations (Kabeer, 1999). There is an ongoing debate regarding how much women's entrepreneurship is about personal choice versus outside pressures. Most recent studies say it is a mix of both, with women's actions and social limits interacting all the time.

Taken together existing research reveals that women's entrepreneurship in the Global South is characterised by persistent tensions between empowerment and necessity, opportunity and constraint, and agency and patriarchy. While high participation rates

may signal economic dynamism, they often coexist with limited growth prospects, insecure livelihoods, and systemic barriers to sustainability (Minniti, 2009; Mead & Liedholm, 1998). These debates highlight a key limitation in the literature, participation alone provides limited insight into women's entrepreneurial experiences unless accompanied by an analysis of how women access, mobilise, and negotiate resources within constrained environments. This concern becomes particularly salient in culturally embedded forms of entrepreneurship, where economic activity is intertwined with social relations, identity, and tradition. As such, this body of literature provides a critical foundation for examining women's entrepreneurial experiences in specific regional and sectoral contexts, including Sub-Saharan Africa and cultural entrepreneurship. Methodologically much of this literature relies on large-scale surveys and cross-sectional indicators of participation and employment, which capture broad patterns but offer limited insight into the everyday processes through which women negotiate resources, agency, and constraint in practice (Minniti, 2009; Mead & Liedholm, 1998).

Although most researchers agree that women's entrepreneurship is important for the economy in the Global South, they disagree about what it means for empowerment and long-term success. Some see it as a way for women to gain power and independence (Minniti, 2009; World Bank, 2012), while others say it is often driven by need and shaped by social barriers (Mead & Liedholm, 1998; Ahl & Marlow, 2012). Focusing only on personal choice can hide the real limits women face (Kabeer, 1999), therefore looking only at barriers can miss women's creative strategies. This study takes a middle view, seeing women's entrepreneurship as a process shaped by both personal action and outside limits. This means looking beyond participation numbers to see how women actually get and use resources in their social settings. That is why this study focuses on resource strategies in women's cultural entrepreneurship.

2.2 Women's Entrepreneurship in Uganda and Sub-Saharan Africa

This section focuses on women's entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa, where many women start businesses but still face significant barriers. Researchers and policymakers have paid more attention to this region because women there are more likely to become entrepreneurs than in many other places (Minniti & Naudé, 2010).

Some see these high participation rates as signs of empowerment and economic inclusion. However, studies show that the reality is more complex, especially when it comes to how sustainable or transformative these businesses really are.

Research shows that women in Sub-Saharan Africa are mostly involved in small businesses, often working in informal or semi-formal settings (Mead & Liedholm, 1998; Minniti & Naudé, 2010). In Uganda, for example, many women own businesses in areas like crafts, food production, and small-scale trade. Even though many women start businesses, these businesses usually stay small, do not grow much, and often close down (Liedholm, 2002; Nichter & Goldmark, 2009). This raises the question of whether simply having more women entrepreneurs really leads to empowerment or lasting livelihoods.

There is an ongoing debate about whether women's entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa is mainly a way for women to gain empowerment or if it is something they do because they are excluded from formal jobs. Some experts believe that starting businesses helps women earn money, support their families, and improve their social standing, and they see women's businesses as important for reducing poverty and helping communities (Minniti, 2009; World Bank, 2001). Others argue that high numbers of women entrepreneurs can hide the fact that many women have few choices and still face major barriers, suggesting that entrepreneurship does not always lead to greater equality (Kabeer, 1999; Ahl & Marlow, 2012).

Women entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa face many barriers that shape their business experiences. These include limited access to education, heavy unpaid care work, and few property or inheritance rights, along with strong patriarchal norms (Amine & Straub, 2009; Jamali, 2009). In Uganda, for example, women often work in markets dominated by men and must also meet family and social expectations. These challenges make it harder for their businesses to grow, plan for the future, or make key decisions.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, these constraints are frequently intensified by women's disproportionate responsibility for household and care labour, which creates persistent time pressures that limit business expansion and strategic engagement beyond subsistence-level activity (Amine & Straub, 2009; Jamali, 2009).

Getting access to finance is often seen as a major challenge for women entrepreneurs. But recent studies show that the problem is not always direct discrimination. Instead, women are more likely to run smaller, newer, or informal businesses, which banks are less likely to support. This means the real issue is where women are positioned in the economy, not just their gender (Aterido, Beck, & Iacovone, 2013).

Non-financial resources are also important for women entrepreneurs. Skills, experience, and social networks matter a lot, especially where formal support is weak (Minniti & Naudé, 2010). In Sub-Saharan Africa, women often rely on family and community ties to get help, find workers, or get information. These networks can help businesses survive, but they can also create extra demands that make it harder for women to invest in or grow their businesses (Portes, 1998; Robson & Obeng, 2008).

Studies from other developing regions show that the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs are not unique to Africa. Research from Asia and Latin America also finds that cultural expectations and gaps in institutions affect how women start and run businesses, and what resources they can access (Yueh, 2009; Luke & Munshi, 2010). These findings suggest that women's entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa is part of a wider global pattern rather than an unusual or isolated case.

Looking at the research on women's entrepreneurship in Uganda and Sub-Saharan Africa, there is a clear contradiction. Many women are involved in business, but they still face major obstacles to growth, sustainability, and long-term independence. Even though women show creativity and determination in using limited resources, their businesses remain strongly shaped by gendered social norms and institutional structures that influence access to both material and non-material resources. This gap between high participation and ongoing challenges highlights a key limitation in existing research: too little attention has been paid to how women strategically mobilise, combine, and prioritise resources in constrained environments. Most studies have focused on firm-level characteristics and outcomes such as growth, survival, and access to finance, often relying on quantitative methods or secondary datasets. As a result, women's lived experiences and everyday strategic decision making, especially in informal and culturally embedded contexts, are underrepresented (Liedholm, 2002; Nichter & Goldmark, 2009).

This understanding shapes the focus of this study, which examines how women cultural entrepreneurs in Uganda use different resource strategies. By taking the local and institutional context into account, the study highlights the value of combining the Resource-Based View with Social Capital Theory. Together, these perspectives help explain how women navigate constraints, draw on social networks and cultural knowledge, and work towards building more sustainable entrepreneurial outcomes.

Research on women's entrepreneurship in Uganda and Sub-Saharan Africa often splits into two main views. While some studies link high rates of women starting businesses to empowerment, poverty reduction, and economic inclusion (Minniti, 2009; World Bank, 2001). However, Other research, particularly from empirical and feminist perspectives, points out that while many women start businesses, these ventures often remain small, informal, and vulnerable, especially among women-owned enterprises (Liedholm, 2002; Nichter & Goldmark, 2009; Ahl & Marlow, 2012).

A key disagreement in this literature concerns the sustainability of women's enterprises rather than participation alone. One major debate focuses on financial capital. Some scholars argue that limited access to finance is the main barrier to women's business sustainability (Mead & Liedholm, 1998; Nichter & Goldmark, 2009), while others suggest that differences in access are largely explained by firm characteristics and women's structural position in the economy, rather than direct gender discrimination (Aterido et al., 2013). This suggests that financial barriers alone do not fully explain women's entrepreneurial outcomes in the region.

On the other hand, more recent work highlights the importance of non-financial and relational resources, such as human capital, social networks, and culturally embedded practices, which can both support business survival and reproduce constraints (Minniti & Naudé, 2010; Portes, 1998; Jamali, 2009). Building on this debate, the present study shifts attention from access to individual resources toward examining how women cultural entrepreneurs in Uganda strategically mobilise and combine tangible and intangible resources within gendered and institutionally constrained environments. Therefore, this focus informs the study's adoption of resource based and relational perspectives to understand what enables entrepreneurial sustainability in the Ugandan context.

2.3 Cultural Entrepreneurship and Authenticity

The previous section looked at women's entrepreneurship in general. Here, we focus on cultural entrepreneurship, which is a less explored area where business activity is closely linked to cultural meaning and identity. Cultural entrepreneurship involves starting and running businesses that create, preserve, or sell cultural products, practices, or ideas (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Khaire, 2017). Unlike other types of entrepreneurship, it combines making money with expressing culture, so things like heritage, symbolic meaning, and identity are very important (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). This mix sets cultural entrepreneurship apart from other small businesses and creates unique challenges between staying true to culture and meeting market needs.

Many studies describe cultural entrepreneurship as a way to turn cultural assets into economic opportunities, especially where jobs are scarce (Khaire, 2017; Meissner, 2021). In this view, cultural entrepreneurs use their knowledge, skills, and traditions to earn a living and keep cultural practices alive. Research points out that storytelling, authenticity, and symbolic differentiation help these entrepreneurs stand out in the market (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019). This approach builds on earlier ideas that see culture as a productive resource rather than a barrier (DiMaggio, 1982).

Not all researchers agree that cultural entrepreneurship is always positive. Some argue that turning culture into a product can oversimplify traditions and lead to exploitation (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). For example, cultural entrepreneurs in the Global South may feel pushed to meet outside market expectations that favour exotic or stereotypical representations of culture, which can limit their creative freedom and reinforce unequal value chains (Meissner, 2021). This ongoing debate asks whether cultural entrepreneurship helps protect culture or instead contributes to its dilution.

Authenticity is an important idea in this debate, but people do not always agree on what it means. Many studies say that authenticity helps build trust and makes products seem more legitimate and valuable to customers (Khaire, 2017). It is often linked to being original, traditional, or connected to a certain culture. These qualities can help products stand out in crowded markets (Beverland, 2005). In this way, authenticity is seen as something valuable that businesses can use to compete.

Not everyone agrees with the positive view of authenticity. The idea itself is not fixed, and people often disagree about what counts as authentic. More and more, researchers

say that authenticity is something people create and negotiate together (Peterson, 2005; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019). What is seen as authentic depends on social rules, what customers expect, and who has power. Because of this, cultural entrepreneurs have to actively show and negotiate their authenticity, not just have it. This often involves additional emotional, relational, and symbolic work, especially for women, who are frequently expected to demonstrate both cultural legitimacy and business success at the same time (Ahl & Marlow, 2012).

In developing countries, cultural entrepreneurship faces extra challenges like informal work, lack of funding, and gendered divisions of labour (Minniti & Naudé, 2010). Some people say it is easier for women to start these businesses because they can use their skills and traditions. However, feminist researchers warn that this can hide bigger problems (Kabeer, 1999). Cultural entrepreneurship can keep women in labour-intensive activities that are hard work and do not grow much, focusing more on preserving culture than on economic expansion.

Even though more people are studying cultural entrepreneurship, the research is still scattered, especially when it comes to how entrepreneurs use cultural resources while facing strong constraints. Most studies look at either stories and symbols or business results, but do not fully connect these with how entrepreneurs combine cultural, social, and material resources in practice. Few studies look at how authenticity can both help and limit entrepreneurs at the same time, especially women working in resource-constrained settings in the Global South. Most research focuses on narratives or market image, and pays less attention to how entrepreneurs manage authenticity and resources in their everyday work (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Khaire, 2017; Hesmondhalgh, 2007).

This study takes a practical view of cultural entrepreneurship. It does not see it as simply empowering or exploitative. Instead, it treats it as a negotiated process shaped by limited resources, social connections, and market demands. By connecting this topic to research on women's entrepreneurship in the Global South and how gender affects access to resources, this section sets up the main ideas for the framework that follows (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Kabeer, 1999). Although it also shows why the Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory matter for understanding how

women cultural entrepreneurs use and maintain both tangible and intangible resources to keep their businesses going.

However, many scholars agree that cultural entrepreneurship is a unique kind of business activity based on meaning, heritage, and identity (DiMaggio, 1982; Khaire, 2017). However, there is debate about whether it truly empowers people. Some see it as a way to turn cultural knowledge and traditions into economic value, especially where jobs are scarce (DiMaggio, 1982; Khaire, 2017). In this view, cultural resources and authenticity help businesses stand out, gain legitimacy, and access markets (Beverland, 2005; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019). Others warn that selling culture can limit creative freedom and reinforce power imbalances, especially when entrepreneurs must meet outside ideas of what is authentic (Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Meissner, 2021). This issue is even more important for women in the Global South, who often face extra expectations around preserving culture, care, and upholding moral standards (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Kabeer, 1999).

This study takes the view that authenticity is not fixed, but is shaped and negotiated through social interactions (Peterson, 2005; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019). This approach makes it possible to see authenticity as both a helpful resource and a possible barrier for women entrepreneurs. By focusing on this tension, the study avoids simple or one-sided explanations and instead builds a foundation for understanding how women cultural entrepreneurs mobilise, perform, and manage cultural resources in gendered and resource-constrained settings.

2.4 Tangible and Intangible Resources in Women's Cultural Entrepreneurship

The Resource-Based View (RBV) says that firms gain an edge when they have resources that are valuable, rare, hard to copy, and cannot be replaced (Barney, 1991). Most RBV research has focused on tangible resources, especially money, as the main drivers of business growth. But in developing countries, women entrepreneurs often face barriers that make it hard to get formal financial resources. These barriers include not having enough collateral, limits on property and inheritance rights, and rules that disadvantage women (Aterido et al., 2013; World Bank, 2019). Because of this, women often cannot rely on traditional tangible resources.

While Several scholars maintain that financial capital remains a critical prerequisite for scaling and sustaining entrepreneurial ventures, even within informal and cultural sectors (Nichter & Goldmark, 2009; Mead & Liedholm, 1998). From this perspective, insufficient access to finance restricts women entrepreneurs to subsistence-level operations, reinforcing business stagnation rather than long-term sustainability. Such arguments suggest that intangible resources alone may be insufficient to compensate for structural financial exclusion. While these debates are well-developed conceptually, empirical studies often examine resource access in isolation rather than exploring how women actively combine, substitute, and prioritise tangible and intangible resources over time, particularly within informal and socially embedded entrepreneurial settings (Barney, 1991; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000; Minniti & Naudé, 2010).

Although other scholars question whether financial capital is always the most important resource. They point out that intangible resources, like skills, cultural knowledge, and reputation, can be just as important, especially in businesses rooted in culture. For women entrepreneurs who have few material resources, these intangible assets often create the most value (Amine & Straub, 2009; Minniti, 2009). In cultural entrepreneurship, things like traditional knowledge, identity, and authenticity are not just helpful they are at the heart of what makes these businesses stand out (Khaire, 2017).

Social relationships also play a big role in how women entrepreneurs get and use resources. Family, community, and informal networks often help women access materials, workers, information, and markets that they could not reach through formal means (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). But these networks can also create obligations that limit how much women can control their businesses or reinvest profits, especially when they are expected to put community needs first (Portes, 1998; Ahl & Marlow, 2012).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, using informal resources is seen as both helpful and limiting. Relying on intangible and relationship-based resources lets women entrepreneurs keep their businesses going even when they lack capital or access to formal systems. But this same reliance can make it hard to grow and can keep businesses stuck in informal settings, which often leads to ongoing economic insecurity for women (Jamali, 2009;

Minniti & Naudé, 2010). The debate continues over whether intangible resources can really replace tangible ones, or if they are just ways to cope with tough conditions.

However, within cultural entrepreneurship, this debate becomes particularly salient. Cultural ventures often depend on authenticity, heritage, and symbolic value resources that are deeply embedded and difficult to replicate. Yet commercialisation pressures require entrepreneurs to balance cultural preservation with market demands, raising questions about how intangible cultural resources can be leveraged sustainably without eroding their symbolic value or cultural legitimacy (Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019).

The literature shows that women cultural entrepreneurs often work where resources are scarce but culture is rich. Tangible resources are important for running and growing a business, but intangible resources like cultural knowledge, skills, identity, and social ties matter even more in tough environments. Still, we know little about how women actually use and balance these resources in their daily work, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa's cultural industries.

This gap between relying on tangible and intangible resources is why this study uses the Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory. By looking at how women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda use and balance different resources, this research aims to add to the discussion on resource strategies, sustainability, and gendered entrepreneurship in the Global South.

There is ongoing debate about which resources matter most for entrepreneurs, especially when resources are limited. Some researchers focus on financial and material capital, arguing that without enough funding, women entrepreneurs are often stuck at a basic level (Mead & Liedholm, 1998; Nichter & Goldmark, 2009). Others point out that intangible resources like skills, experience, cultural identity, and social networks can be just as important, particularly in settings where culture shapes business (Amine & Straub, 2009; Minniti, 2009; Khaire, 2017). Still, relying mainly on these intangible resources can be a double-edged sword. While social and cultural capital can help women start and keep their businesses going, they can also reinforce informality and dependency, making it harder to grow or gain independence (Portes, 1998; Jamali, 2009; Ahl & Marlow, 2012). Because neither tangible nor intangible resources alone explain how women sustain their businesses, this study looks at how

women cultural entrepreneurs use and balance different types of resources in their specific social and cultural contexts. This approach combines the Resource-Based View with Social Capital Theory to better understand how women develop resource strategies when facing both economic and social challenges.

2.5 Social Capital, Networks, and Embeddedness

For women entrepreneurs in the Global South, getting and using resources depends not just on their own skills or money. It is also closely tied to their social relationships and networks. Social capital, which means the resources people can access through their social connections, often helps entrepreneurs make up for a lack of formal support, especially where institutions are weak or missing (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, formal institutions that support markets are often weak or not available to everyone. As a result, people often turn to social networks for things like finance, information, and access to markets (Mead & Liedholm, 1998; Minniti & Naudé, 2010). Women entrepreneurs especially depend on family ties, community groups, and informal associations more than men do. This is partly because of cultural expectations and because women are often left out of formal economic systems (Brush, 1992; Greve & Salaff, 2003). Research shows that these networks can help women get start-up money, find workers, receive emotional support, and gain legitimacy. These resources can help their businesses survive when conditions are tough (Nichter & Goldmark, 2009).

Still, not all research sees social capital as a good thing. Social networks can help, but they can also create limits, especially for women. Some scholars point out that these networks can bring obligations, pressure people to fit in, and reduce personal freedom, especially in close communities (Portes, 1998). For women entrepreneurs, being part of family and community networks can help their businesses, but it can also increase unpaid care work, create expectations to give back, and add pressure to share money (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Kabeer, 1999). Because of this, social capital is not always empowering for women.

Studies from Sub-Saharan Africa show this problem clearly. Informal networks can make it easier to start a business, but they do not always help businesses grow or last over time (Liedholm, 2002; Robson & Obeng, 2008). Close relationships with family and community are often linked to starting businesses out of necessity and focusing on survival. In contrast, weaker connections can help people find new information, reach new markets, and grow their businesses (Granovetter, 1973; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Women entrepreneurs often depend more on strong ties, which can make it harder for them to change direction or grow.

Access to social capital is also shaped by gender. Patriarchal norms and gendered systems affect who can use which networks, how, and at what cost (Amine & Straub, 2009). In many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, women's networks are limited by space and social rules, and are often focused on the home and community instead of business or professional areas (Downing & Daniels, 1992; Minniti, 2009). Because of this, the networks that help women survive can also make it harder for them to grow, innovate, or gain important resources.

Recent research on access to finance adds complexity to our understanding. Some studies find that gender gaps in formal financial access shrink when firm characteristics are taken into account (Aterido, Beck, & Iacovone, 2013). However, social capital remains crucial for women entrepreneurs. This suggests that only women with enough informal support, resilience, and strong social ties can start or continue in entrepreneurship, reinforcing women's reliance on social capital while masking its hidden costs.

The literature shows that social capital is both helpful and limiting for women entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa. It can help women start and maintain businesses where institutions are weak, but it can also create barriers that restrict growth, independence, and long-term success (Portes, 1998). This mixed effect points to a gap in current research: not enough focus on how women themselves manage, prioritise, or push back against the pressures within their social networks.

This study takes a critical and relational view of social capital. It is not seen as always empowering or always limiting. Instead, social capital is understood as a resource whose value depends on how it connects with other assets, both tangible and

intangible. This approach leads directly to the theoretical framework, which combines Social Capital Theory and the Resource-Based View. Together, these help explain how women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda work with both opportunities and challenges in their networks as they aim for sustainable businesses.

Overall, the literature reviewed in this chapter shows that there are still several unresolved tensions in current research. Scholars generally agree that women's entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurship, and resource mobilisation are important for economic participation in the Global South. However, there is still debate about how to define and measure empowerment, sustainability, and growth (Minniti, 2009; Ahl & Marlow, 2012). Studies also differ on whether women's entrepreneurship is driven by agency or necessity, whether cultural resources are more of an asset or a constraint, and whether access to finance is more important than mobilising intangible and relational resources (Mead & Liedholm, 1998; Khaire, 2017; Portes, 1998). Many of these debates are treated separately, and there is not much research on how women entrepreneurs actually manage different types of resources at the same time in complex social and cultural settings. This gap is especially clear in studies on women cultural entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the specific roles of gender, culture, and informality are still not well understood. This study addresses this gap by examining how women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda actively mobilise, combine, and negotiate tangible, intangible, and social resources in pursuit of entrepreneurial sustainability. In doing so, it responds to calls for more nuanced, context-sensitive, and integrative analyses of women's entrepreneurship in the Global South and provides the foundation for the theoretical framework developed in the next chapter.

2.6 Literature Gaps and Research Positioning

There is a lot of research on women's entrepreneurship in the Global South, but important gaps remain (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Minniti, 2009; Nichter & Goldmark, 2009). Most studies focus on how many women participate, what stops them, and broad trends (Minniti, 2009; World Bank, 2012). These are useful for showing who gets in and who is left out, but they do not explain how women actually use and manage resources in their daily work (Brush et al., 2009; Kabeer, 1999). Because of this, research often looks at barriers or results, instead of seeing women's entrepreneurship

as an active process shaped by women's choices within limits (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Kabeer, 1999).

Second, while more scholars are studying cultural entrepreneurship, the research is still scattered (Khaire, 2017; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019). Most studies either look at symbolic aspects like storytelling and authenticity or focus on market outcomes such as differentiation and value creation (Beverland, 2005; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). Few bring these views together with resource-based and relational approaches that consider how cultural, social, and material resources work together in practice (Hall, 1992; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). This lack of integration is especially clear in studies of women entrepreneurs in the Global South, where cultural resources are both central to the business and can also limit what is possible (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Kabeer, 1999).

Authenticity is seen as important, but most research treats it as either something helpful or something that holds people back (Beverland, 2005; Peterson, 2005). Not many studies look at how authenticity can be both at the same time helping women gain respect in the market, but also making it harder to change or grow (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019; Meissner, 2021). This issue is not well studied for women cultural entrepreneurs who work in settings where tradition, gender roles, and ideas about what is proper all affect what they can do (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Kabeer, 1999).

Most research on women's entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa, and especially Uganda, looks at things like getting loans, working informally, and dealing with rules (Aterido et al., 2013; Liedholm, 2002; Nichter & Goldmark, 2009). These are important, but they do not fully explain how women keep their businesses going (Minniti & Naudé, 2010). We still know little about how women use relationships and cultural resources not just money to keep their enterprises alive when facing big challenges (Portes, 1998; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

To address these gaps, we take a relational and resource-based approach to explore how women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda work with both tangible and intangible resources as they build sustainable businesses (Barney, 1991; Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). We bring together the Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988), and treat cultural authenticity as something that is negotiated, not fixed (Peterson, 2005; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019). This lets me

move past accounts that only focus on participation or celebration, and instead offer a more context-sensitive and gender-aware perspective on women's entrepreneurship and resource mobilisation in the Global South (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Kabeer, 1999).

2.7 The Cultural Resource Paradox in Women's Entrepreneurship

Research on women's entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa often points to a tension between culture and business sustainability. Cultural traditions and skills help women start and run businesses, but these same factors can also make it harder for their businesses to grow or become more formal. In this way, culture can both support and limit women's entrepreneurship, reflecting what can be understood as a cultural resource paradox.

Research shows that women entrepreneurs in the Global South often use their cultural knowledge, like traditional crafts, heritage products, and local practices, to build trust and stand out in the market (Minniti & Naudé, 2010). These cultural resources can make it easier for women to start businesses because they can use skills they already have and gain support from their communities, especially where jobs and funding are hard to find. In this way, culture becomes an important resource that helps women start and keep their businesses going.

However, researchers also warn that culture can hold women back. Expectations about gender roles and what is seen as proper work can limit women's freedom, time, and choices (Kabeer, 1999; Ahl & Marlow, 2012). In cultural businesses, women may feel pressure to stick to tradition and meet social expectations instead of trying new ideas or growing their businesses. Because of this, the same cultural factors that help women start businesses can also keep them small and informal.

Market forces can make this problem worse. Demand for authentic cultural products often comes from buyers or companies far away, who decide what is valuable (Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Meissner, 2021). Women running cultural businesses may have to meet outside expectations while also staying true to their communities. Balancing these demands can involve additional emotional, relational, and strategic labour that is often overlooked in studies of entrepreneurship.

Although culture is now seen as a resource, research still does not show how women actually deal with this in real life. Many studies either see culture as something that

helps women or as something that holds them back, but they do not look closely at how women use, mix, and choose between cultural, social, and material resources over time. There is little evidence about how women cultural entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa balance keeping their culture alive with making a living, especially when resources are limited.

This gap is the main reason for this study. By looking at women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda, the research aims to go beyond simple ideas about culture and business. It looks at how women actively use and manage cultural, social, and tangible resources in their daily work. This study adds to discussions about women's entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurship, and resource-based perspectives in the Global South, and sets up the theory used in the next chapter.

Even though there is a lot of research on women's entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurship, and resource use, these studies rarely show how these issues come together in real life. Most research looks at gendered challenges, cultural value creation, or the types of resources women use, but not how women navigate all of these at the same time within one framework (Minniti, 2009; Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Khaire, 2017). There is limited evidence on how women cultural entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa combine cultural, social, and material resources while dealing with informality, patriarchy, and weak institutions (Jamali, 2009; Portes, 1998). This is especially true in Uganda, where women's cultural entrepreneurship is common but not well understood. This study examines how women in Central Uganda use, negotiate, and prioritise different resources to sustain their businesses. These questions directly shape the research and inform the theoretical framework presented in the next chapter.

2.8 Summary of Literature Review and Implications for the Theoretical Framework

The literature in this chapter shows that women's entrepreneurship in the Global South is shaped by overlapping factors like gender, culture, resources, and social ties (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Minniti, 2009; Kabeer, 1999). Studies from different regions and sectors point to ongoing tensions: women's participation is often caught between empowerment and necessity, agency and structural barriers, and opportunity and insecurity (Minniti, 2009; Mead & Liedholm, 1998; Ahl & Marlow, 2012). Although entrepreneurship is often seen as a way to promote economic inclusion, the research

makes clear that women's businesses are still shaped by gendered social systems that restrict growth, sustainability, and independence (Brush et al., 2009; Jamali, 2009; Kabeer, 1999).

Research on women's entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa highlights this contradiction. Many women take part in entrepreneurship, but they still face barriers like limited access to finance, lack of time, exclusion from institutions, and strong patriarchal norms (Minniti & Naudé, 2010; Amine & Straub, 2009; Jamali, 2009). Women show resilience and creativity in dealing with these challenges, but studies suggest that just looking at participation does not tell us much about long-term success. It is important to consider how women find, use, and manage resources in their own settings (Liedholm, 2002; Nichter & Goldmark, 2009; Minniti & Naudé, 2010).

Looking at the literature on cultural entrepreneurship adds another layer. Culture can help create value but can also hold people back (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Khaire, 2017; Hesmondhalgh, 2007). Resources like heritage, identity, authenticity, and meaning can help women start and shape businesses, especially when other resources are limited (DiMaggio, 1982; Khaire, 2017). But turning culture into a product and having to prove authenticity can reinforce power imbalances and make it harder for women to grow their businesses (Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Peterson, 2005; Meissner, 2021). This dynamic is conceptualised in this study as the cultural resource paradox, where cultural embeddedness can both support and constrain women's ability to sustain their businesses.

A key limitation appears across these studies. Although researchers recognise the value of tangible, intangible, and relational resources, we still know little about how women actually combine, prioritise, and change these resources in real situations (Barney, 1991; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000; Minniti & Naudé, 2010). Most research treats resources as fixed or looks at only one type at a time, which does not show how women manage competing demands and constraints as they arise (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992; Barney, 1991). This lack of understanding is especially clear in work on women cultural entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa (Liedholm, 2002; Nichter & Goldmark, 2009).

To address this gap, this study uses a framework that brings together the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Capital Theory. The RBV helps explain how different

resources support business sustainability (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984), while Social Capital Theory highlights the importance of relationships and networks in getting and using resources (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998). By combining these ideas, the study looks more closely at how women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda use different resources in challenging cultural and institutional settings.

The next chapter explains this framework in detail, describing its main ideas and why it matters for understanding how women use resources and build sustainable businesses. By linking the framework to the debates and gaps discussed in this review, the study keeps a clear connection between past research, theory, and the analysis that follows (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This literature review moves from broad debates to a closer look at how resources are used in specific cultural settings. In doing so, it sets up the main ideas for the framework discussed in the next chapter.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This theoretical framework takes the main debates and gaps from the literature review and turns them into clear tools for analysing the data in this study. The literature review showed what we know about women's entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurship, and resource challenges in the Global South, but also pointed out ongoing questions about how women find and use resources in settings shaped by gender and culture. Here, the framework uses these findings to explain how we will understand and study these processes.

Unlike the literature review, which looks at and discusses earlier research, the theoretical framework is meant to be practical. It gives me the concepts we need to make sense of the data and helps keep the research questions, analysis, and findings connected (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, we are not trying to create a new theory, but instead to use and combine existing ideas in a way that pays attention to context, gender, and culture.

This study draws on the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Capital Theory to address the gaps identified in the literature. The RBV provides a framework for

understanding how entrepreneurs use both tangible and intangible resources to achieve sustainability, especially when resources are limited (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). Yet, as the literature review shows, it is not possible to fully explain how women entrepreneurs in the Global South access and use resources without looking at the social networks and relationships that shape their work. Social Capital Theory adds to the RBV by focusing on how social ties, obligations, and connections influence the way resources are accessed or limited (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988).

By bringing these two perspectives together, we create a framework for looking at how women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda find, use, and balance resources in settings shaped by culture and society. This approach helps address the main tensions from the literature, such as the balance between empowerment and limits, cultural value and economic needs, and personal action and outside barriers. The framework links the literature review to the data analysis, making sure that important ideas like resources, social capital, and culture are used throughout the study.

3.1 Justification of the Theoretical Framework

Choosing the right theoretical framework is essential to keep the research questions, data, and analysis aligned. Since this study looks at how women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda find and use resources to build sustainable businesses despite challenges, the framework needs to address both how resources are used and the social settings where this happens (Orobia et al., 2020; Kuhar & Shanmugasundaram, 2022). No single theory covers all of these aspects on its own. That is why this study uses a combination of the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Capital Theory.

The Resource-Based View provides a well-established lens for analysing how firms and entrepreneurs utilise resources to create value and sustain competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). Within entrepreneurship research, RBV has been widely used to examine how access to and control over tangible and intangible resources shape firm performance and sustainability (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992; Marshall et al., 2020). This perspective is particularly relevant for analysing women's entrepreneurship in resource-constrained environments, where limited access to financial capital often necessitates reliance on alternative resource combinations (Aterido et al., 2013; Lakuma et al., 2019). By distinguishing between different types

of resources and emphasising their strategic use, RBV offers a structured way to analyse how women cultural entrepreneurs mobilise tangible assets, skills, knowledge, and cultural resources in pursuit of sustainability.

However RBV has its limits, especially in places where businesses are informal, institutions are weak, and social connections matter a lot (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019). RBV usually treats resources as things a business owns, but it often misses how people actually get and use resources through relationships and social networks. For women entrepreneurs in the Global South, what resources are available often depends on family ties, community expectations, and gender roles (Monteith & Camfield, 2019; Bullough et al., 2022). So, RBV by itself does not fully explain how women access or are blocked from resources in real life.

To fill these gaps, Social Capital Theory is added as another way to look at the problem. This theory sees resources as things people get through their social networks and relationships, focusing on how connections shape access to information, support, and opportunities (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). For women entrepreneurs, especially where formal markets are weak, informal networks are often the main way to get things done (Akintimehin et al., 2019; Brogan & Dooley, 2024). Social capital shows how trust and mutual support can open doors to resources like informal loans, labour, access to markets, and cultural acceptance or legitimacy (Najjinda et al., 2025).

Social Capital Theory also highlights that being deeply connected within social networks can have mixed effects. Research shows that these networks can create obligations, reinforce gender roles, and restrict autonomy, especially for women entrepreneurs in close family or community settings (Portes, 1998; Monteith & Camfield, 2019). In businesses rooted in culture, these pressures are even stronger because legitimacy and authenticity depend on community approval and following established norms (Hoffman & Ventresca, 2002; Meissner, 2021). Including this perspective helps the framework recognise that social relationships can both support and limit the sustainability of entrepreneurship.

Bringing together RBV and Social Capital Theory gives a framework that is more sensitive to context and gender than using either one alone (Dal Mas & Paoloni, 2020; Kuhar & Shanmugasundaram, 2022). RBV helps show what resources women cultural

entrepreneurs use, while Social Capital Theory explains how their social connections affect access to those resources. Together, these theories provide a strong base for looking at how women in resource-limited and culturally rooted businesses find and use resources. This combined approach shapes how the study will interpret the data on resource use, reliance on networks, and how women deal with cultural and social challenges.

3.2 Key Concepts and Analytical Definitions

This section explains the main concepts that guide the theoretical framework and the analysis that follows. These are not meant to be complete or universal definitions. Instead, they are practical tools based on the literature and shaped for the study of women's cultural entrepreneurship in the Global South.

The study focuses on both tangible and intangible resources when looking at what makes entrepreneurship sustainable. Tangible resources are things like money, equipment, materials, and infrastructure that can be owned or controlled (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). Intangible resources are less visible, including skills, knowledge, experience, reputation, and cultural value. In cultural entrepreneurship, intangible resources often matter more, especially when financial resources are hard to get.

Social capital means the resources people can access through their relationships and networks, not just what they own themselves (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). In this study, social capital includes close ties like family and community, as well as weaker connections to markets, intermediaries, or institutions. Social capital can help with getting information, labour, or financial support, but it can also create obligations and limits, especially for women working within gendered social systems (Portes, 1998).

Cultural resources are the knowledge, skills, identities, traditions, and meanings that come from a particular culture. Entrepreneurs can use these resources to set their businesses apart and create value. These resources are a type of intangible asset, rooted in social and historical backgrounds, which makes them hard to copy or expand quickly (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Khaire, 2017).

Authenticity is not something that cultural products just have on their own. Instead, it is shaped by what people expect, the rules of the market, and who holds power.

Cultural entrepreneurs often have to work to show and maintain authenticity (Peterson, 2005; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019). In this study, authenticity is seen as an intangible resource that can help a business gain trust and value, but it can also create challenges because of cultural expectations and the effort needed to keep it up.

The study also uses the idea of the cultural resource paradox to look at how culture can both help and limit women's entrepreneurship. This paradox is about how being rooted in culture and being seen as authentic can open doors and set businesses apart, but can also make it harder to grow, formalise, or change direction. This is not a new theory, but a way to bring together common tensions found in research on women's entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurship, and social embeddedness. The analysis uses this idea to show how women cultural entrepreneurs work with both the benefits and limits of cultural resources as they try to build sustainable businesses.

3.3 The Cultural Resource Paradox as an Analytical Lens

This study draws from research on women's entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurship, and how resources are mobilised within communities. It introduces the idea of the cultural resource paradox to help examine how culture can both support and limit women's ability to sustain their businesses. Cultural resources like heritage skills, identity, authenticity, and symbolic meaning can be helpful assets, but they can also create challenges for entrepreneurs.

Cultural resources can help women start businesses and stand out, especially when they do not have much access to money or equipment. Studies have found that using culturally embedded knowledge and practices can make it easier to get started, build legitimacy, and earn income, since entrepreneurs can rely on skills and social recognition they already have (Khaire, 2017; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). In this way, culture becomes an important intangible resource that helps businesses survive and find their place in the market.

At the same time, these cultural resources can also hold women back. Expectations about staying authentic, following tradition, or behaving in ways seen as appropriate for women can make it harder to innovate, grow the business, or reach new markets, particularly in patriarchal and community-based social settings (Kabeer, 1999; Ahl & Marlow, 2012). In cultural industries, the pressure to keep things "authentic" can limit

entrepreneurs' ability to adapt their products or practices to changing market demands, which may reinforce informality and economic insecurity (Hesmondhalgh, 2007).

The cultural resource paradox is not a new theory. Instead, it brings together ideas from different strands of research to highlight recurring tensions around cultural embeddedness. This concept helps show how culture can both support and limit entrepreneurial sustainability, rather than viewing it as only positive or negative. It also responds to calls for more nuanced and context-sensitive analyses of women's entrepreneurship in the Global South.

In the research, the cultural resource paradox is used to explore how women entrepreneurs deal with these challenges in practice. Rather than assuming that culture affects business sustainability in a fixed way, the study examines how women strategically use, adapt, perform, or resist cultural expectations alongside other tangible and intangible resources. In doing so, the concept helps link perspectives from the Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory, enabling an integrated analysis of resource strategies within culturally embedded entrepreneurial contexts.

3.4 Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) looks at what makes one business stand out from another by focusing on what is inside the company, not just what is happening in the market (Barney, 1991; Kor et al., 2016; Wernerfelt, 1984). It sees firms as collections of resources, and how useful these resources are depends on what they are and how they are used over time. The VRIO framework helps decide if a resource can give a business a long-term edge by checking if it is valuable, rare, hard to copy, and not easily replaced (Barney, 1991).

RBV is useful for understanding women's cultural entrepreneurship in places where resources are limited and it is hard to get funding or support from formal markets. The framework separates resources into two types: tangible ones like money, materials, and equipment, and intangible ones like skills, knowledge, reputation, cultural heritage, and symbolic value (Barney, 1991; Hall, 1992). In businesses that are deeply connected to culture, these intangible resources often matter most, especially when there is not much access to physical resources.

In Central Uganda, cultural entrepreneurs rely on intangible resources like traditional knowledge, artisanal skills, heritage-based practices, and authenticity to stand out. For instance, the skills used in making bark cloth, which is recognized as intangible cultural heritage, are deeply rooted in history, socially validated, and hard to copy (Khaire, 2017; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019; Venkatraman et al., 2020). These qualities allow such skills to meet several VRIO criteria. Here, authenticity is more than just a symbol; it works as a reputational and cultural resource that helps build trust, strengthen legitimacy, and improve market position.

RBV helps show which resources women cultural entrepreneurs use and how these resources support their businesses over time. However, the framework has limits, especially in places where things are informal, institutions are weak, and social connections matter a lot. Traditional RBV mainly focuses on internal business assets and pays less attention to the relational and institutional conditions through which resources are accessed and validated (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). In Central Uganda, for example, getting money, materials, and recognition often depends on family ties, community networks, and trust-based relationships rather than formal markets.

RBV can explain why some cultural resources are valuable or hard to copy, but it does not explain well how entrepreneurs acquire, sustain, or legitimize these resources in socially embedded settings. Because of this, RBV alone does not fully capture the lived experiences of women cultural entrepreneurs. To address this gap, Social Capital Theory is used alongside RBV to focus on how relationships shape access to, negotiation of, and constraints around resources.

The VRIN/VRIO Framework

For a resource to provide a sustainable competitive advantage and superior performance, it must satisfy a set of criteria, initially known as VRIN (Barney, 1991) and later often referred to as VRIO (Barney, 1991; Xie, 2021).

Table: VRIO

Criterion	Description	Relevance to Ugandan Cultural Entrepreneurs
Valuable	The resource enables the firm to exploit market opportunities or reduce market threats, thereby	Traditional skills and knowledge, like bark cloth production, are valuable because they allow access to premium

	adding financial value (Barney, 1986).	niche markets and meet a demand for authenticity.
Rare	The resource is difficult to find among existing and potential competitors, making it unique to the firm.	Specific, localized cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge are inherently rare, especially when tied to specific ethnic groups or locations.
Inimitable	The resource is imperfectly imitable; competitors face bottlenecks in acquiring or copying it due to complexity or ambiguous connections to capability.	Oral traditions, unique artisanal skills, and strong community-based reputation are often complex, tacit, and historically dependent, making them hard to copy.
Non-Substitutable	The resource cannot be easily substituted by another alternative resource to achieve the same performance or benefit.	For customers seeking authentic cultural products, the original intangible resources (heritage and technique) are difficult to substitute with modern or non-traditional alternatives.

RBV helps explain how these women use their cultural and economic resources to grow their businesses and stay connected to their heritage. Unlike the Market-Based View, which looks only at the external market and treats all firms as the same, RBV highlights the unique value of small, culturally rooted businesses. Still, RBV often misses the importance of relationships needed to use these resources. For this reason, we also use Social Capital Theory to better understand the networks these women depend on.

RBV explains why intangible cultural assets like bark-cloth knowledge are valuable and hard to copy (Khaire, 2017; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019; Venkatraman et al., 2020), but it does not show how women gain recognition in their communities or connect with the networks they need to use these assets. Because of these gaps, RBV by itself does not fully capture the experiences of women cultural entrepreneurs. A relational perspective is needed to add to its focus on internal resources.

3.5 Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory (SCT) is often used with RBV because it focuses on how relationships help entrepreneurs. Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), and Putnam

(1993) describe social capital as the value people get from their networks, trust, and shared norms (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). These connections help people work together and share information or resources (Nyamari, 2024). This is important for women entrepreneurs, since many still find it hard to get traditional financial support.

Social Capital Theory is important where formal support is weak or uneven, and entrepreneurs must rely on informal relationships. In Central Uganda, women cultural entrepreneurs use family, community, and peer networks to get information, labor, informal finance, and market access that are hard to find through formal means (Akintimehin et al., 2019; Nyamari, 2024).

But social capital can be both helpful and limiting. Networks can support business survival, but they can also create obligations, reinforce gender roles, and limit independence, especially in patriarchal or community-based settings (Portes, 1998; Monteith & Camfield, 2019). For women entrepreneurs, this means balancing their business work with expectations of giving back, caring for others, and following cultural norms.

Social Capital Theory helps us see how people get and use resources through relationships, but it does not show if these resources lead to lasting business success. This is why we combine SCT with RBV, which helps judge the value of resources. Using both gives a clearer picture of how women cultural entrepreneurs turn their networks into lasting results.

Economic and Resilience Mechanisms

Social networks matter for entrepreneurs everywhere, however they are especially important in places where formal support is limited, like Uganda and other parts of the Global South (Akintimehin et al., 2019). In these situations, social capital often takes the place of formal market systems, affecting how entrepreneurs find resources, handle risks, and keep their businesses running. Because of this, it is important to look at social capital in its local and institutional context, instead of assuming it is always a good thing.

In Central Uganda, social capital is an important resource for women cultural entrepreneurs. It helps them get information, find workers, access informal loans, and connect with markets. Family, community, and peer networks often give women

support they cannot get from formal sources (Nyamari, 2024; Najjinda et al., 2025). These connections help women handle daily business problems and adjust when the market fluctuates, keeping their businesses running even when things are uncertain.

But social capital does not always bring clear benefits. Family and community ties can help with stability and short-term problems, but they can also create obligations that limit how entrepreneurs make decisions (Monteith & Camfield, 2019). For women, expectations to give back, take care of others, and follow cultural norms can make it harder to reinvest in their businesses or grow them.

Overall, social capital can help women entrepreneurs in Central Uganda by giving them support and resources when formal systems are weak, while at the same time making it harder for them to use these resources freely because of social expectations. Seeing both sides of social capital is important for understanding how women deal with challenges and keep their businesses going. It also shows that social capital should be examined alongside other resources, rather than being seen as something that always helps.

Authenticity and Competitive Advantage

Therefore, Social Capital Theory holds that authenticity helps cultural entrepreneurs build trust and gain recognition. For women in Central Uganda, being seen as authentic depends on how their communities view and accept their work. This social approval affects whether their cultural products are trusted and valued, both locally and beyond (Kuhar & Shanmugasundaram, 2022).

Social relationships and community networks help build and keep authenticity by supporting shared norms and traditions. When people see cultural products as authentic and rooted in their culture, these products become valuable and stand out in the market. In Social Capital Theory, authenticity is produced through collective validation and social endorsement (Khaire, 2017).

However, authenticity can also create limits. When people expect entrepreneurs to stick to tradition and community rules, it can make it harder to change products, try new ideas, or meet market needs (Dal Mas & Paoloni, 2020). For women, these pressures are often stronger because gender norms connect cultural responsibility to

moral and social expectations. This adds more emotional and symbolic work to keeping up authenticity.

Social Capital Theory shows how authenticity is built and supported by the community, but it does not explain how this leads to lasting business success. Authenticity can help women entrepreneurs gain trust and resources, but for it to be a real advantage, it must be unique, hard to copy, and valuable in the market. This is why it is important to look at both Social Capital Theory and the Resource-Based View when thinking about how authenticity works for women in cultural businesses.

3.6 The Combined Theoretical Framework: RBV and Social Capital Theory

Using both the Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory together gives a fuller and more practical way to understand women's cultural entrepreneurship in Central Uganda. Each theory has its strengths, but on their own, they do not fully explain why these businesses succeed and last.

The Resource-Based View helps identify what makes a resource valuable, like cultural authenticity, traditional skills, and assets that fit the VRIO criteria. However, it mostly looks at things from inside the organisation and often sees resources as unchanging. It does not fully explain how relationships affect the way entrepreneurs get, keep, and use these resources, especially in places where institutions are weak and trust is very important (Dal Mas and Paoloni, 2020).

Social Capital Theory, on the other hand, is useful for showing how entrepreneurs find opportunities, resources, and support through their networks (Nyamari, 2024). But by itself, it does not show how this access leads to lasting competitive advantage. Social connections are important, but they are often common and easy to copy, so they do not always give a business a long-term edge.

Using both theories together helps fill these gaps. The Resource-Based View points out the unique cultural assets, like authenticity, that give a business an advantage. Social Capital Theory explains how trust and relationships make these assets more believable, valuable, and harder for others to copy.

Integration of RBV and SCT

Combining the Resource-Based View with Social Capital Theory helps link a firm's internal strengths to the outside relationships that make those strengths useful. Each theory adds something important. RBV points to key resources like cultural knowledge, heritage skills, and authenticity. SCT shows how people access and keep these resources through trust and social networks (Nyamari, 2024; Meissner, 2021). In cultural entrepreneurship, success often relies on both specialised skills and support from the community (UNESCO, 2022). Competitive advantage comes from how internal abilities and outside relationships work together. This is why using both RBV and SCT fits the research question well.

However, Social Capital Theory has some limits. While SCT explains how entrepreneurs use networks and trust to get resources (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000), it does not focus on whether these resources are unique or hard to copy. Community support can help with things like raw materials or informal loans (Akintimehin et al., 2019; Nyamari, 2024), but these are not always rare or hard to imitate, which RBV says is important (Barney, 1991; Xie, 2021). SCT often sees networks as mostly positive, but Ugandan women entrepreneurs also face obligations, gender roles, and pressures to give back, which can limit their independence (Monteith and Camfield, 2019; Namasembe, 2024). Because of these issues, SCT alone cannot fully show how women cultural entrepreneurs turn social connections into lasting advantages.

Table: Integration of RBV and SCT

Theoretical Focus	**RBV (Internal Resources)**	**SCT (Relational Context)**	**Combined Dynamic Function**
Core Element	Unique and Inimitable Assets (Authenticity, Traditional Skills)	Networks, Trust, and Reciprocity (Bonding & Bridging Capital)	Authenticity Credibility and Mobilization
Explains	What resources are valuable (VRIN/VRIO).	How the resource is accessed, supported, and protected.	How a rare cultural resource is converted into a sustainable economic advantage.

Example in Context	Cultural Knowledge: Bark cloth production skills (Rare, Inimitable).	Community Trust: Validation of bark cloth's origin and technique by local peers.	Inimitability: Social complexity makes the validated authenticity hard to replicate, securing premium market access (Nyamari, 2024).
Addresses	Formal Institutional Weakness: Assets are firm specific.	Lack of Finance: Networks provide informal loans and resource-sharing (Nyamari, 2024).	Resilience: Internal assets are sustained by external social support, allowing the firm to withstand shocks (Brogan & Dooley, 2024).

By using both theories together, the study shifts beyond conventional single-lens analysis and examines how the strategic value of cultural resources is strengthened and sustained through the depth of social relationships.

Integrated Theoretical Framework

This study draws on the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Capital Theory to understand how women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda establish and sustain their businesses. Using these two perspectives together makes it possible to examine both the tangible and intangible resources these women depend on, as well as the social networks that help them access those resources. It also shows how they try to maintain cultural practices while responding to market demands. This balance often creates tension, since they must grow their businesses while still protecting cultural traditions. Bringing both theories into one framework therefore strengthens the study by grounding it in practical and evidence-based insights.

The framework highlights that business growth and long-term stability come from using internal resources effectively, which is central to RBV, and from the external connections that Social Capital Theory emphasises. The discussion places particular attention on how these women work to preserve cultural authenticity. This links to what scholars describe as the cultural resource paradox (Meissner, 2021).

This combination of economic empowerment and cultural preservation also has implications for Uganda’s broader goals for inclusive development. It connects directly to several Sustainable Development Goals, including gender equality (SDG

5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), and reduced inequalities (SDG 10) (Turyakira et al., 2025). Taken together, RBV and Social Capital Theory provide more than a basic description. They offer a clear analytical lens for understanding the experiences of these women and for addressing the study's main research question (Brogan & Dooley, 2024).

3.7 Ontological and Epistemological Positioning

This study takes an interpretivist approach to knowledge and a constructivist view of reality. It assumes that social reality is shaped by people's interactions, cultural meanings, and the specific contexts in which they live (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Crotty, 1998). When looking at women's cultural entrepreneurship, this means that ideas like resources, authenticity, and sustainability are not fixed or the same everywhere. Instead, they are shaped by the social and cultural settings in which women work.

The study uses an interpretivist approach to understand how people make sense of their experiences (Schwandt, 1994). This is especially relevant here, since the research looks at how women cultural entrepreneurs see, use, and work with resources in environments shaped by gender and culture. Instead of measuring objective facts, the study builds knowledge by interpreting what participants share about their own experiences, drawing on their narratives and meanings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

This way of thinking fits with the study's theories and qualitative approach. The research uses the Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory, but always keeps in mind that resources and networks get their meaning from social relationships, not just from being counted or measured (Barney, 1991; Bourdieu, 1986). The study also looks at the cultural resource paradox as something that is worked out in practice and context, rather than as a fixed rule or structural condition. Using qualitative, semi-structured interviews helps capture people's personal experiences and the specific contexts they are part of (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The study takes a clear interpretivist and constructivist approach, which helps avoid confusion and keeps the theory, methods, and analysis aligned (Crotty, 1998). This makes the research more consistent and allows for a clear, well-supported interpretation of the results.

3.8 Analytical Implications of the Theoretical Framework

This chapter's theoretical framework shapes how we interpret the data in the next chapter. Instead of just describing the background, we use the framework to look closely at how women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda find resources, manage social ties, and deal with cultural limits as they work toward sustainable businesses (Barney, 1991; Mahoney & Pandian, 1992; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

The Resource-Based View helps me focus on the kinds of resources these entrepreneurs use. We look at both tangible and intangible resources, like money, materials, skills, cultural knowledge, reputation, and what these things mean to others (Barney, 1991; Hall, 1992; Marshall et al., 2020). We use RBV to see how women combine and rank these resources, and how limits on resources affect their choices about keeping their businesses going (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992; Kuhar & Shanmugasundaram, 2022).

Social Capital Theory helps me look at how social connections shape access to resources. We pay close attention to family, community, and informal relationships, and how these can help or hold back entrepreneurs (Bourdieu, 1986; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000; Dal Mas & Paoloni, 2020). We also look at how social expectations, give-and-take, and being part of a group affect decisions, resource access, and the ability to grow or reinvest in their businesses (Monteith & Camfield, 2019; Najjinda et al., 2025).

The cultural resource paradox brings together both theories. We use it to understand how cultural resources can help women start and stand out in business, but also limit their growth or ability to formalise (Hoffman & Ventresca, 2002; Meissner, 2021). This approach lets me see how women balance different cultural, social, and economic pressures in their daily work, instead of just seeing culture as good or bad (Venkatraman et al., 2020;).

Using these theories together helps me interpret the findings with attention to context, gender, and resource limits (Bullough et al., 2022; Kuhar & Shanmugasundaram, 2022). By linking theory to the main focus areas, the framework keeps the research questions, theory, and analysis connected. This approach makes the study stronger and helps me draw clear conclusions about how women cultural entrepreneurs in the

Global South manage resources and aim for sustainability (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019; Najjinda et al., 2025).

4. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research approach, design, and methods employed to examine women's cultural entrepreneurship in Central Uganda. We explain the philosophical assumptions that form a foundation of the study, detailing how the assumptions influenced the entire research process. Special priority is put on explaining the key strategies adapted for ensuring the trustworthiness of the study.

Furthermore, we outline our qualitative data collection tools and analysis methods, putting particular focus on the semi-structured interview technique implemented remotely to capture the in-depth women's cultural entrepreneurship perspectives in Central Uganda. This chapter also addresses ethical considerations underpinning the study that put more emphasis on ensuring research credibility. Finally, we discuss the study challenges and constraints encountered during the study and the strategies we used to overcome them.

4.1 Philosophical Assumptions

Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) argue that when attempting to explain a research philosophy, it is important for researchers to reflect upon their own beliefs that influence the way they view the world and how they understand it. They argue that these beliefs shape the research process, starting with the way questions are formulated and asked, and how participants' thoughts are interpreted. This part of the research describes the philosophical base of our study, including our personal assumptions about the reality regarding women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda (ontology), how knowledge was developed and understood (epistemology), and the influence of cultural values and ethical considerations (axiology).

This philosophical model that underpins this study is grounded by our belief about reality, the nature of knowledge, and the role of cultural values in influencing our research process. This model facilitated the formulation of research questions that are aligned with the study objectives and shaped our decisions in selecting appropriate

research methods and data collection tools. This perspective also provided us a critical lens through which we explored and interpreted the meaning of the strategies that are employed by women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda as they mobilize cultural resources and strive to sustain their enterprises within a culturally embedded environment.

4.1.1 Ontological Assumptions

Ontology refers to the foundational beliefs that explain what people make of reality. As Saunders et al. (2019) noted, even though it may be difficult to understand, our ontological beliefs determine the way we view and study research phenomena. This study adapted a social constructivist perspective because we believed that reality experienced by women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda more so the strategies used to mobilize cultural resources, maintain cultural authenticity, and ensure business sustainability is socially constructed. This women's reality is influenced by their personal entrepreneur experiences encountered while balancing their socio-economic and cultural environment in Central Uganda, a region that is deeply shaped by cultural values, thereby influencing the access to tangible and intangible access cultural resources in a socio-economic context that presents both opportunities and challenges.

This study therefore on women's cultural entrepreneurship involved several key ideas, including resources (such as tangible assets, social capital, and cultural knowledge) and sustainability (encompassing socioeconomic and cultural sustainability), as well as challenges and opportunities that arise. These concepts do not carry a single, accepted interpretation from both the authors' and the participants' perspectives. Instead, they are shaped by the lived experiences and personal interpretations of individual women cultural entrepreneurs, making them difficult to define in absolute terms. Given this context, the study aimed to examine the various, socially constructed realities and thoughts that these women attach to such ideas instead of trying to give one definitive or objective truth.

Building on Schaefer and Alvesson’s argument of ontological humility, based on these ideas, we believed that the interpretation/explanation we constructed was just one part that could explain the bigger picture of the lived women's cultural entrepreneurship experiences. As authors we also believe that there is no one single clear, objective truth

to be found, but instead the need to search for what comes from the shared thoughts and making of interpretations from them. This argument fits well with this study on women's cultural entrepreneurship. This perception shaped the way we approached, collected, interpreted, and reported the research results on resource strategies, and the sustainability of women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda.

4.1.2 Epistemological Assumptions

Epistemology refers to the assumptions regarding what constitutes knowledge, what is regarded as true, valid, and worth knowing and how such knowledge is communicated (Saunders et al., 2019). A social constructionist epistemological strategy was adopted for this study, it aligns with an interpretivist perspective. From this standpoint, we view knowledge not as something discovered in resource mobilization strategies, sustainability practices, and cultural authenticity among women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda. Instead, we see it as something that is actively created through social interaction that is shaped by cultural traditions, contextual language, and the lived and working experiences of these women (Saunders et al., 2019).

This interpretivist perspective was chosen because it aligns well with Schwandt et al.'s (2007) argument that study interpretation is crucial to the understanding of the various human experiences and that evidence and meaning depend on how we interpret different experiences. In the same way, Alvesson (2023) cautions that empirical findings are not the objective truth but are influenced by different interpretative perspectives of different people. This is reaffirmed by Van de Ven's (2016) assertion that phenomena are not static but are assigned different interpretations by various individuals to co create knowledge and meaning.

As social epistemologist, our role extended beyond mere collecting and analysing of data but instead to becoming active collaborators in the co-construction of knowledge with women participants as our partners in mean-making, and insights were allowed to emerge through our interaction and reflective dialogue rather than detached observation.

Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) supports the epistemological approach by arguing that, if taken, creates relevant evidence and influences the tools used in gathering evidence and the way it is interpreted. In our study about cultural entrepreneurship, we accept

that the different approaches used by women to identify, access, and sustain resources and to promote cultural authenticity are influenced by various contextual factors. These factors, in addition to the way individuals attach to and promote sustainability, are deeply rooted in operational social contexts. Therefore our research questions were designed to collect and examine the individual and collective women experiences, insights, and understandings they do accord to their entrepreneurial actions.

4.2 Research Approach

The research approach defines the way an author transits from philosophical assumptions set to the real research practice, thereby shaping the existing relationship between theory frameworks and the empirical results while offering guidance on the selection of methods (Creswell, 2013). In line with the social constructivist philosophy underpinning this study. We chose a qualitative and constructive approach because of its ability to help us understand how women's cultural entrepreneurship is socially constructed, experienced, and made meaningful within Central Uganda.

Qualitative research was also chosen because of its ability to enable an exploration of multiple realities and diverse meanings individuals' assigns to their entrepreneurial journeys (Creswell, 2013).Instead of just seeking generalizable results or set objective truths, we aimed to get rich, in-depth insights from the interviewed women (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). And through taking a naturalistic and interpretive stance, we aimed to understand the phenomena as they unfold in their original contextual settings, more so the intricate socio-cultural changes and structural barriers that shape the women cultural entrepreneurial practices in the region thus leading to a deeper self-understanding of their actions thereby uncovering the several meanings women attach to their actions.

More still in this study, we utuilized an abductive reasoning process in which we viewed the set theoretical framework and empirical data are viewed as closely intertwined. This helped us to easily integrate research field insights with theoretical concepts through a reflexive process (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Rather than adhering to a strict path from theory to data (deduction) or vice versa (induction), this examination progressively engaged with various emerging themes from empirical insights and theoretical concepts. This reflexive engagement process enabled greater

flexibility and adaptability to field patterns, leading to deeper research insights into how women balance the preservation of traditional cultural values with the sustainability of their entrepreneurial activities.

4.2.1 Research Design

Research design is the strategy undertaken to integrate the different elements of a study into a coherent and logical way to ensure that the set research questions are effectively addressed (Yin, 2014). It avails a structured approach that brings together the philosophical assumptions, research approach, data collection methods, and analytical procedures into a unified plan of inquiry. In line with our social constructivist and interpretivist foundations set for this study, we adopted a qualitative multiple-case study research design to study women's cultural entrepreneurship in Central Uganda (Creswell, 2013).

We treated each interviewed woman cultural entrepreneur as a case, which is just embedded within a specific socio-cultural, economic, and institutional context. A case study is a qualitative research approach that enables an in-depth, contextual study of a phenomenon within its real-life setting (Creswell, 2013). This approach was particularly found valuable for studying cultural entrepreneurship, as it allowed for an exploration of how entrepreneurial practices, meanings, and identities are socially constructed and enacted by the interviewed individuals within Central Uganda, a region that is deeply embedded within cultural traditions, gendered roles, social networks, and local belief systems, making a case study design both appropriate and necessary.

A multiple-case study design was deliberately chosen rather than a single-case approach because we aimed to note different women's thoughts across different forms of cultural entrepreneurship, including traditional crafts, storytelling, herbal medicine, cultural events, and ritual services. Yin (2014) argues that studying multiple cases helps to strengthen the analysis of results, as it enables the researchers to compare experiences exhibited in thoughts that characterise data collected, making it possible to identify repeating patterns and to examine how theoretical ideas are expressed across the different contexts studied. Through our engagement with 15 women cultural entrepreneurs from different cultural sectors, we were able to capture common

thoughts regarding how women mobilize, preserve authenticity, and sustain their businesses.

Our design is based on an interpretivist framework, which assumes that reality is socially constructed and that meaning can be obtained through interpretations of individuals' lived experiences (Schwandt et al., 2007). The design was set to facilitate an understanding of how women cultural entrepreneurs interpret, negotiate, and give meaning to their entrepreneurial practices within their culturally embedded contexts. This was in line with Flyvbjerg's (2004) argument that case studies are important because they help to generate context-dependent knowledge and for understanding complex social phenomena from the perspective of those experiencing them.

Consistent with this set design, semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection method. The interviewer allowed participants to narrate their entrepreneurial experiences in their own words while still being guided with questions that helped to address the study's core research questions. The flexibility that is also common with multiple cases helped to ease a repetitive and abductive analytical process, where insights from the material were continuously revisited and interpreted alongside relevant theoretical perspectives, including the Resource-Based View (RBV) and cultural entrepreneurship literature (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

Importantly, the research design also accommodated the remote nature of data collection, necessitated by geographical distance between the authors and the study area. Conducting interviews via WhatsApp audio calls did not compromise the integrity of the design; rather, it allowed for contextual sensitivity, participant convenience, and access to geographically dispersed cases.

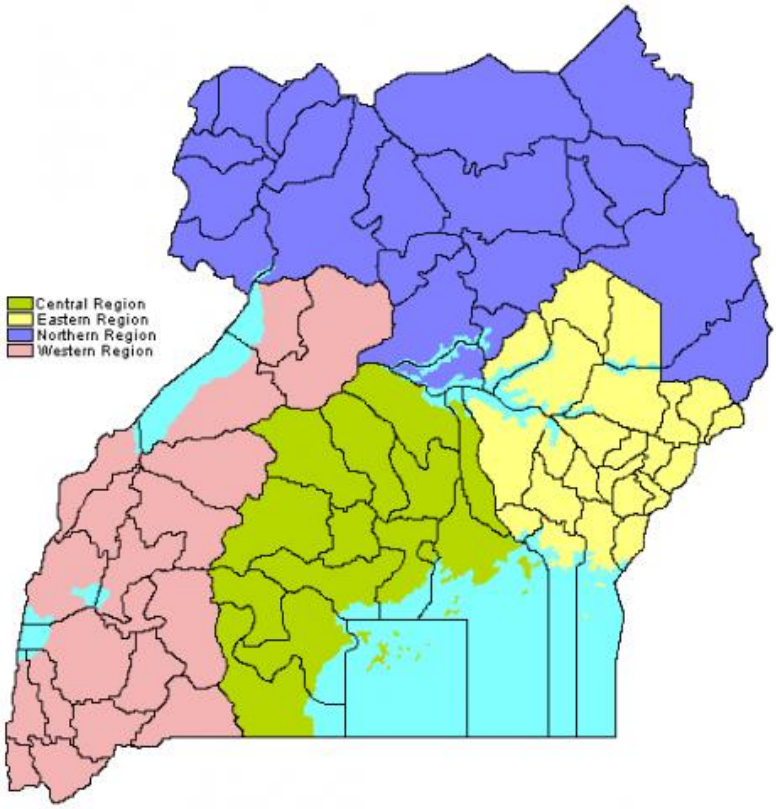
All in all, this qualitative multiple-case study design allowed for a flexible and consistent investigation into women's cultural entrepreneurship in Central Uganda. The design made it possible to engage deeply with each woman's entrepreneurial experience while also examining similarities and differences across cases. This approach generated rich, context-sensitive insights into how women draw on cultural resources, negotiate questions of authenticity, and work to sustain their enterprises within culturally grounded and gendered settings.

4.2.2 Study Area

This study focuses on Central Uganda, a region where the commercialization of cultural heritage is particularly on the rise. According to Turyahikayo (2016), this area hosts a significant concentration of women-managed cultural enterprises, ranging from traditional weaving and craft production to herbal medicine and ritual services. These activities are part of the local economy and a primary means of financial support for many women and their families.

Our choice of Central Uganda as a study area is based on its unique position as a commercial centre. Here, the pressure to make profits is high, creating a conflict and providing a good environment for studying how women balance business demands with the need to maintain their cultural practices. By focusing on this region, the research can yield practical insights into how these entrepreneurs navigate a competitive market while safeguarding their historical heritage.

Figure: Central Uganda and regional boundaries shown on map.



Source: Republic of Uganda Vice President's Office (n.d.), Maps and Regions.

4.2.3 Participant Overview

The study relies on a primary group of 15 women cultural entrepreneurs based in Central Uganda. These individuals interviewed represent a broad cross-section of the region's cultural economy, with their work ranging from ancient craft techniques to traditional community services.

Table: Summary of Interview Logistics and Data Collection

Interview ID	**Product/Service Sector**	**Estimated Length of Interview (Minutes)**	**Data Collection Method**	**Transcript Verification Status**
Interview 1	Bark Cloth Products	45	Audio Recording & Notes	Verified/Transcribed
Interview 2	Traditional Crafts (Baskets)	55	Note-Taking Only	Verified/Transcribed

Interview 3	Traditional Foods/Herbs	60	Audio Recording & Notes	Verified/Transcribed
Interview 4	Herbal Medicine	70	Note-Taking Only	Verified/Transcribed
Interview 5	Traditional Instruments	35	Note-Taking Only	Verified/Transcribed
Interview 6	Art/Drawings	40	Audio Recording & Notes	Verified/Transcribed
Interview 7	Traditional Textiles (Weaving)	50	Note-Taking Only	Verified/Transcribed
Interview 8	Traditional Storytelling/Folklore	62	Audio Recording & Notes	Verified/Transcribed
Interview 9	Community Elder/Mentor	50	Note-Taking Only	Verified/Transcribed
Interview 10	Local Community Leader/Council	40	Note-Taking Only	Verified/Transcribed
Interview 11	Crafting/Ritual Items	48	Note-Taking Only	Verified/Transcribed
Interview 12	Cultural Events Planning	52	Note-Taking Only	Verified/Transcribed
Interview 13	Clay Pottery	65	Note-Taking Only	Verified/Transcribed
Interview 14	Traditional Mats/Textiles	58	Note-Taking Only	Verified/Transcribed
Interview 15	Traditional Services	75	Audio Recording & Notes	Verified/Transcribed

4.2.4 Data Collection Procedure

The interviews for this study were conducted remotely via WhatsApp audio calls, connecting the research process in Sweden with 15 women entrepreneurs in Central Uganda. We also made a deliberate effort to use a digital approach to allow the participants to remain in their own business environments during our conversations. By speaking from their own workspaces, the women could share their "lived experiences" in a setting where they felt most comfortable and convenient.

4.2.5 Sampling Strategy

Since there was no centralized registry of cultural businesses in Central Uganda, we had to be creative in how we identified participants. A mix of purposive and snowball sampling was used to find women whose work was truly embedded in the region's cultural heritage.

4.2.2.1 Target Population

Following the sampling principles of Hair et al. (2011), we defined our study population as women cultural entrepreneurs operating in Central Uganda. We specifically looked for individuals whose businesses were not just commercial but in connection with their culture. This ensured that our 15 participants could provide the "insider" knowledge required to analyze the nuances of resource mobilization and cultural authenticity.

Beyond their technical expertise, we selected women with a willingness to get involved in the remote research format. Given our study's timeline, accessibility of the participants was a key factor; therefore, we included participants who were easy to reach via WhatsApp and ready to share their experiences in detail. This targeted approach allowed us to move quickly from a broad population to a group of experts capable of answering our core research questions.

4.4.3.2 Sampling Frame Construction

Following Mugenda and Mugenda's (2003) advice that researchers should first establish a sampling frame by selecting a representative sample, we encountered a unique challenge. There was no accessible list of women cultural entrepreneurs operating in the targeted area, which we could adopt as our sampling frame. To solve this, the interviewer reached out to a coordinator at the Cross-Cultural Foundation Uganda.

Because of his strong connections and ties to the local cultural scene, he provided the initial referrals that served as the starting point. This "insider" knowledge was vital for identifying genuine entrepreneurs who might otherwise be invisible to an outsider carrying out research who resourcefully provided referrals based on his understanding of the Ugandan women's cultural entrepreneurship field.

4.4.3.3 Sampling Method

With this initial list as our foundation, we applied a purposive sampling approach to select women based on their sector aiming for a diverse mix of weavers, herbalists, and storytellers. This allowed us to align our participants directly with the study's objectives (Bell et al., 2022).

To further enrich the sample, we added a snowball element (Hair et al., 2011). We asked our first round of participants to point us toward other entrepreneurs in their professional networks who met our criteria. This was particularly effective for reaching traditional practitioners like "Ssengas" (cultural mentors), who typically operate through word-of-mouth rather than formal business channels. By combining the Foundation's referrals with these personal recommendations, we ensured our final group of 15 represented both formal and informal cultural sectors.

4.4.3.4 Determining the Sample Size

While our target was to interview 10 to 15 participants, our final sample size was finally dictated by the principle of data saturation.As defined by Bell et al. (2022), saturation is the point when further interviews no longer bring new thoughts or information on the research topic. In our case, by the time we reached the 15th interview, the main themes particularly those regarding the balance of resource mobilization and the preservation of cultural authenticity began to consistently repeat.

Following the guidance of Stenfors et al. (2020), we prioritized the depth and richness of these 15 narratives over a larger, more generalized numerical sample. This ensured that our data set was sufficiently comprehensive to answer our research questions without becoming redundant, allowing us to focus on the intricate "lived experiences" of the entrepreneurs we interviewed.

4.3 Measures of Quality

4.3.1 Reflexivity and Bias

We acknowledged from the start that being a team of two men and one woman was an important factor that can be used to promote the integrity of our findings. We also recognized that our own backgrounds, ranging from our different religious values to our gendered differences, could be used as a lens that influences how we hear and interpret the women's stories concerning the study. This aligns with Adler's (2022)

view that a researcher's presence is never truly neutral. To address this, we engaged in active reflexivity during both the data collection and the analysis process.

During the interviews, the interviewer constantly exercised constant awareness of his personal beliefs. For instance, when participants explained how ancestral spirits guided their business decisions, he had to carefully reserve his own religious views to ensure he was noting the participants' views without bias or judgement. Consequently, this personal effort was then supported by the team's constant checks and balances system during the analysis. The female researcher and the second male author cross-checked the transcripts to ensure our coding reflected the participants' actual meanings rather than a male-centric interpretation. We were able to keep the participants' real voices at the center of the study.

4.3.2 Interview Techniques

In qualitative research, the depth of the data relies on the trust established between the researcher and the participant (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Because this study was coordinated from Sweden while the participants were in Central Uganda, we closed this geographic gap by conduct the interviews remotely using WhatsApp. Although we understands and speaks several languages spoken across the region, the participants interviewed preferred to communicate in Luganda, one of the local languages. By accepting their choice, we were able to move beyond formal, rigid questioning and engage the women in a more natural, culturally-grounded dialogue.

Collecting data using WhatsApp presented a unique challenge; for example, no verbal cues could be recorded. To solve this, we concentrate on detailed note-taking throughout each call, noting down the key ideas and the context in which they were shared. We did record four of the sessions with the consent of the participants; however, these recordings were not used for direct quotes or as a primary analysis tool. Instead, they were used to compare with the taken notes.

This gave us a way to verify his note-taking style for the other 11 interviews where we didn't have audio. By the time the full team sat down to look at the data, we weren't just looking at cold notes; we were working with a set of English records that a native speaker had already "sanity-checked" against the source. This helped us keep the

participants' actual lived realities at the center of our analysis, rather than our own academic assumptions (Saunders et al., 2019).

4.4 Ethical Considerations

Collecting and analyzing data from the diverse cultural landscape of Central Uganda meant that our ethical duties went far beyond just following institutional rules. We had to ensure that our research did not disrupt the lives or the dignity of the 15 women who opened up to us (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Because we were using WhatsApp, a tool that usually narrows the line between personal and professional life, we had to be especially careful. We treated every digital interaction as a formal field visit, making sure our remote presence never felt like an intrusion into their private or business spaces.

4.4.1 Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent

It was our intention to ensure that the women being interviewed felt comfortable participating in the study but not coerced. All introductions about the study were conducted in Luganda by us, clearly explaining the purpose of the research to everyone and how we intended to use the information collected. Our aim was to make women feel secure enough to withdraw from the interview at any point if they wished without needing to provide an explanation.

4.4.2 Anonymity and Data Protection

The protection of the privacy of our participants was also our constant priority, as they were sharing with us their personal business struggles and cultural traditions. To keep their identities safe, we immediately removed their names from all notes and recordings. We assigned numerical codes, such as Interview 1 or Interview 10, to all data sets. These files were then stored in secure, protected digital folders. It was ensured that only the authors had access to the raw data and that our respondents' identities were hidden in the final report (Hair et al., 2011).

4.5 Thematic Data Analysis

4.5.1 The Analysis Process

Our analysis followed a rigorous four-stage path, moving from raw field notes to verified theoretical insights.

Data Familiarization and Immersion. The analysis process began with a deep immersion into the field notes. We spent significant time reading and re-reading the notes taken to ensure that we are aware of the deep meaning of the "why" behind them. We looked for how a woman's women answered questions regarding the topic of study. (Saunders et al., 2019). Before we started breaking the data into smaller pieces (data reduction), we made sure we understood each woman's story as a whole. This helped us preserve the original context of their lives in Central Uganda (Hair et al., 2011).

Coding and Data Categorization After we felt we had a deep understanding of the women's stories, we began the systematic process of coding. We didn't just look for keywords, but we looked for similar ideas across the 15 interviews. We divided the field notes into small, meaningful parts; for example, every time a participant mentioned using her grandmother's techniques or relying on a local community network, we labelled the similar thoughts with a given code. By bringing these similar ideas together, were able to build strong categories that directly represented the entrepreneurs' daily lives (Bell et al., 2022). This stage was essential because it turned hours of conversation into a structured map of data that we could then analyze for deeper meaning.

Thematic Evolution and RBV Integration. In the third stage, we used an abductive approach to group these initial codes into broader, more abstract themes. We looked at these themes through the lens of the Resource-Based View (RBV), specifically examining how cultural knowledge functioned as a unique and inimitable business asset. This was a repetitive process where we constantly checked the emerging themes against the "lived experiences" of the 15 women to ensure we were not forcing the data into preconceived academic categories.

Verification and Trustworthiness. The last step we took was to make sure our conclusions actually matched what the women revealed. To do this, the 3 authors sat down and cross-checked the final themes against the original notes we had taken. We went back and forth between our high-level ideas and the specific Luganda-to-English summaries to make sure we hadn't drifted too far from the participants' intended meaning. We used this to re ground our academic analysis in the real-world stories of

the entrepreneurs. This additional level of verification allowed us to be confident that our final report wasn't just our own interpretation but the real reflections of the women entrepreneurs.

4.5.2 Synthesis of Themes: From Codes to Categories

The analysis process continued after the initial coding; this next stage involved noting the higher-level patterns that could explain the broader approaches that the women cultural entrepreneurs use. We did, but we did not just list data, but we looked for the "conceptual bridge" that connected individual field notes to our theoretical framework, they include:

4.5.2.1 Social and Kinship Networks as Pools of Resources

This theme emerged from the high frequency of codes related to how the entrepreneurs gathered support. By grouping codes such as Networking, Community Networks, and Engagement, we identified a key insight: social relationships in Central Uganda are not just social they function as a strategic business asset. For these women, their kinship and community ties are their most reliable source of resources.

4.5.2.2 Authenticity versus Commodification

We developed this theme by bringing together the code 'cultural authenticity' with negotiation strategies. Our intention was to capture the difficulty of keeping their heritage "authentic" while also making their products commercially viable for a modern market. It highlights a constant negotiation between tradition and financial survival.

4.5.2.3 Resource Constraints and Tactical Innovation

By examining the link between sustainability challenges and entrepreneurial adaptations, we realized that the scarcity of resources actually acts as a driver for creativity. This theme shows that the challenges these women face are not just barriers; they force a specific kind of innovation born from necessity and resilience.

4.5.2.4 Cultural Knowledge as an Intangible Asset

We viewed codes like Tradition and Cultural Preservation through the lens of the Resource-Based View (RBV). This allowed us to frame traditional knowledge as a

"non-substitutable" resource. Essentially, their cultural heritage provides a distinct competitive advantage that mass-produced businesses cannot easily copy.

4.5.2.5 Gender, Power, Leadership and Spirituality

The final themes, Gendered Roles, Power, Leadership and Spirituality, and Resilience, were formed by grouping recurring patterns that spoke to the women's identity. Even when the above were mentioned less frequently than financial issues, they represented significant underlying forces that shaped how the women navigated their business leadership and personal purpose.

Table 2: Synthesis of Codes and Themes

Final Theme	Supporting Codes (Examples)
Social & Kinship Networks	Networking, Community Networks, Community Engagement
Authenticity vs. Commodification	Cultural Authenticity, Negotiation Strategies, Cultural Preservation
Resource Constraints & Innovation	Sustainability Challenges, Entrepreneurial Adaptations
Cultural Knowledge as an Asset	Tradition, Cultural Authenticity, Heritage Preservation
Gender, Power, & Leadership	Negotiating Power, Gender Constraints, Leadership Roles
Spirituality & Resilience	Overcoming Challenges, Identity, Purpose-driven Work

4.6 Study Limitations and Practical Challenges

While the multi-case study approach we adopted provided us with a detailed, comparative view of cultural entrepreneurship in the region, conducting research in Central Uganda while based in Sweden presented several practical hurdles. We addressed these through an adaptive and reflexive approach to ensure the integrity of the data was not compromised by geographical or technical barriers.

Internet connection: One of the problems faced during the data collection stage was the unreliable local internet connection. Since our interviews took place over WhatsApp, weak network performance always caused delays and sometimes resulted in dropped calls. We reduced this challenge by using a flexible communication system that involved changing to regular cellular calls when the connection was too poor,

although this was met with higher costs. Additionally, we helped our participants to finance the internet cost by purchasing for them the bundles that could last for the interview period.

We encountered considerable difficulties with participant availability since many of these women juggle the "double burden" of running a business and handling domestic duties. Managing these conflicting schedules demanded a great deal of patience and flexibility. We frequently had to reschedule interviews or pause mid-session most notably in three instances when participants had to assist customers. This adaptability was crucial not only for effectively collecting data but also for fostering the rapport and trust necessary to obtain genuine, unhurried stories.

Getting respondents who qualified for the study from a distance also required a more careful screening process than traditional in-person fieldwork. Although we could not directly visit markets, we adopted a purposive and snowball sampling strategy, supported by a referral system. One of the interviewers' friends, who works as a coordinator at a local NGO in Uganda, helped us identify some contacts based on his knowledge of the region and experience in the cultural sector. While using the referral system, we ensured that every entrepreneur we interviewed met our criteria for "cultural entrepreneurship" and simultaneously established a chain of trust between the research authors and the local community.

Lastly distance was one of our biggest issue, we were divided between Sweden and the field in Uganda and our couldn’t allow for frequent international flights, a decision was made to use online interviewing, which turned our daily lives into a constant loop of Google Meet calls and WhatsApp threads. While we couldn't be there in person, the digital platform connected us with our participants and it was also important to the authors to keep connected with each other throughout the entire research process.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The findings in this chapter reflect a blend of our original research goals and the fresh patterns we discovered while spending time with the data. While our systematic coding originally identified six specific categories as shown in Table 2 of the Methodology

we decided to organize this chapter around four broader pillars. We made this choice to provide a clearer, more direct answer to our research questions and to highlight the most significant patterns in how these women sustain their businesses. While the table below serves as a roadmap for these major findings, the full detail of our initial categories including specific insights on spirituality and gender remains the backbone of the in-depth theoretical analysis we provide in Chapter 6

5.1.1 Alignment with Theoretical Framework (RBV) and (SCT)

We structured the study's finds in a way that reflects direct and logical connection with the established theoretical foundations of the research.

Theme 5.2 (Resource Mobilization & Utilization): This section connects well to the characteristics of the Resource-Based View (RBV), and the research results clearly give the exact nature by which women cultural entrepreneurs use networks to acquire both tangible and intangible resources.

Theme 5.3 (Social Capital & Community Endorsement): The findings we presented in this section reflect the tenets of the Social Capital Theory (SCT). The analysis identifies the important ways that help women use social networks to create their stakeholder relationships, thereby improving their business ability that supports the sustainability of their operations.

On the other hand, theme 5.4 (Cultural Authenticity) acts as an important link between the two theoretical frameworks. We interpreted it as a major point where the RBV (authenticity is seen as a unique competitive asset utilized by women) and that authenticity is what is used by women to earn trust and endorsement from their community (SCT).

Finally, theme 5.5 (Sustainability Challenges) acts as an important analytical bridge that provides the justification for the use of two frameworks. The results demonstrate a clearly observed structural gap that demands an explanation to understand the challenges that affects business sustainability.

5.2 Resource Mobilization and Utilization

This theme examines how women cultural entrepreneurs strategically and flexibly mobilize business resources, portraying that social connections play an important role in enabling them to access both tangible and intangible resources, which include finances, support, and information. And the sustainability of their businesses depends on recognizing that assets particularly traditional knowledge, specialized skills, and social ties are not just inherited advantages. but they are nurtured and used to strengthen market identity and ensure the continuity of their operations.

5.2.1 Accessing Materials and Strengthening Supply Chains

The results indicate that social networks are fundamental in enabling women entrepreneurs to access relevant business raw materials and to stabilize their stock. The participants consistently reported their reliance on available local connections to overcome structural hardships and financial barriers, through utilizing community ties to acquire local materials in instances where normal supply chains were poor or expensive to finance.

Their dependency is characterised by a strategic shift toward an organised collaboration; for instance, women forming partnerships that lead to easy and timely acquiring of the business materials. This strategic shift that is characterized by a proactive resource management for business sustainability is well demonstrated by the participants in the results. Furthermore, women's networking abilities go beyond mere resource sourcing to the creation of smooth supply channels that ensure the continuity of their businesses.

Interview 5 demonstrated that networking helped to improve women's relationships with their suppliers and customers; this relationship was fostered through community engagement. This was important for operational continuity and stock stabilization; therefore, their actions are acting as a crucial replacement for the formal rigid structures that are missing or not utilised. in the market.

5.2.2 Facilitating Market Penetration and Distribution

Networking is used as a tool to strategically improve market access and facilitate business growth, always giving a dual purpose for the women cultural entrepreneurs.

The data clearly indicates that this dual function is intentionally used as a tactic to maximize their network utility. Several participants, such as those we profiled in Interviews 1 and 6, said that they use community networks to acquire resources and to improve their marketing strategies. This illustrates an organised mechanism that is aimed at addressing both input (resource) and output (market) challenges that affect them.

To try to solve limitations associated with limited geographical scale and physical mobility, women entrepreneurs constantly carried out collaborative distribution. In this strategic tactic, they utilize the formed partnerships with colleagues and suppliers to jointly use routes and logistics; this effectively enables them to widen their customer base more than they could with individual efforts.The respondent in Interview 1 noted that engaging in partnerships with colleagues and suppliers helped her to both share interactions and make product distributions. This finding therefore emphasizes the women's strategic utilization of social capital that moves beyond mere survival to actively scaling their business growth and improving market access within the areas of business operations.

5.2.3 Enabling Knowledge Transfer and Skill Enhancement

The results also revealed that women's networking goes beyond just acquisition of tangible materials to enabling knowledge sharing and personal business development. This demonstrated that social relations are crucial for improving human capital, which is an important intangible business resource. When asked about the benefits of partnerships, several respondents reported that they engage in informal learning with colleagues and suppliers, a process that facilitates an exchange of business ideas, acquisition of experience, and acquisition of good feedback, as noted by Interview 1. Participants' contentious use of terms such as "I share" and "I interact" strongly demonstrated that these partnerships acted as non-commercial avenues for professional growth.

This reliance on knowledge sharing is a clear strategy utilized for capacity building. In a context, it helps to replace formal training opportunities, with networks acting as an important substitute. The entrepreneur in Interview 6 clearly said that she started by visiting friends in the art business for consultation to acquire more skills to improve

her drawings. This finding emphasises that social capital is necessary for providing the crucial informal training and mentorship needed for skill development, ensuring that the women's knowledge and capabilities improve.

5.3 Social Capital and Community Endorsement

In this theme, we examine how women's active community involvement improves their social capital, which is then used to get legitimacy and resilience and enable growth in the absence of formal institutional support. The findings in this section particularly illustrate the strategic function of social ties in mitigating risks associated with an institutional missing gap.

5.3.1 Utilizing Community Events for Market Access

Community events are strategically used as tools for both market mobilization and product needs assessments. Women are involved in local platforms, such as cultural festivals, religious celebrations, and traditional ceremonies; this enables them to gain increased sales while in the same way building good social capital through increased recognition and network formation. This tactic demonstrates a good understanding of their operating environment, where social presence translates directly into commercial viability.

Entrepreneurs reported that attending such community events was a planned approach that aimed not merely at increasing sales but at actively acquiring important business connections with prospective customers, thereby turning informal social gatherings into relevant market-collection opportunities. Moreover, these gatherings provided valuable resource insights for businesses to increase stock. Interview 12 noted that women observed the traditional instruments and materials used, which helped to guide their inventory stocking; this ensured that their products remained culturally relevant and in demand. By actively gathering information, these entrepreneurs turn their community networks into effective sales and supply routes.

5.3.2 Strengthening Social Capital Through Collective Action

The women entrepreneurs reported the role of collaboration, which is used as a tool to overcome limitations in their community, where formal business support is limited.

This strategy moves beyond individual effort to the creation and use of shared resources and as a guard against market changes. The participant in Interview 2 argued that operating individually was difficult and advised that they must rely on each other. This requires them to share jointly knowledge about the purchase of supplies and facilitating product sales. This collective approach functions as a communal business approach that demonstrates a well-planned reaction to the existing institutional gaps.

This model, facilitated by local community networking, increases their access to resources and reduces overall operational risk, thereby building enterprise resilience. The data showed that improved networking and partnerships improved relationships with suppliers and customers, actively ensuring adequate material presence even when essential items, such as textiles or other raw materials, were scarce or subject to market fluctuations. In essence, by using their social capital, the women created a stable, reliable operating environment that compensates for the lack of formal support structures.

5.3.3 Community Endorsement and Legitimacy

Active community involvement directly strengthens business prospects by helping women entrepreneurs build integrity and establish a stronger social status. Gaining community recognition is crucial for attracting customers, more so in markets where trust and respect can influence purchasing decisions. One interview highlighted that women in male-dominated trades actually stand out more. Because their craft is so high-quality, people are often surprised and impressed, which naturally draws in more customers and boosts their success.

Earning credibility also helped to increase professional respect. The entrepreneur in Interview 4 reported that her success in herbal medicine led to her being invited by several schools to guide students, a form of public respect that earned her a sense of purpose and support within her community. This confirms that social capital can effectively solve the risks associated with a lack of formal respect.

5.3.4 Building Emotional and Practical Support Networks

Community engagement provides good non-commercial support that extends far beyond material aid, which is crucial during periods of economic hardships. Most

participants mentioned their reliance on friends, neighbors, and extended networks for encouragement and business advice. This support goes above mere commercial relevancy to offering the personal and supportive resources that enable women to run their businesses during challenging times (a theme further explored in Section 5.4.9, which is the full sub-theme Work-Life Imbalance and Burnout). This finding illustrates that social capital gives support that replaces the stress that is common with operating businesses within environments characterized by high financial challenges and gender-based discrimination.

5.4 Cultural Authenticity

This theme details the women entrepreneurs' dedication to preserving their cultural heritage and the strategic utilization of tradition as a crucial business asset in their businesses, this establishes a link between cultural Resource-Based View (RBV) assets and Social Capital Theory (SCT) outcomes (trust).

5.4.1 Embodiment of Tradition

These women don't just use their culture for branding; they live it through their craft. For example, the use of local herbs isn't random it's dictated by specific community rituals passed down through generations (Interview 4). Every step of the production process follows these long-standing cultural 'rules' (Interview 11), making the heritage a literal part of the finished product rather than just an inspiration.

A key element of their marketing strategy involves the use of storytelling and local storytelling. This approach is employed to create deep customer appreciation by involving cultural meaning and historical background in their products. Examples included the use of a compelling sales approach that linked mats to marriage traditions (Interview 14) and using rich stories to connect products to the community's shared culture (Interviews 3, 10, and 11). This intentional use of stories adds value that, linked to specific heritage, cannot be easily copied by competitors.

Finally, this entire approach is a strategic move that fundamentally builds trust with the target market. Through respecting traditional cultural norms and respecting local values and beliefs, the entrepreneurs make an intentional effort to establish rapport and secure client loyalty. This strategy, as demonstrated by the service provider in

Interview 15, proves that authentic cultural practice is a powerful tool for commercial success.

5.5 Sustainability Challenges

This theme outlines the significant barriers that threaten the growth and long-term viability of the cultural enterprises, providing the contextual evidence that explains the reliance on informal RBV and SCT strategies.

5.5.1 Financial and Institutional Barriers

Financial problems were noted as a challenge; it was characterised by a serious lack of institutional recognition. Participants noted financial problems, including high interest rates and high-value collateral requirements imposed by banks, which restrict their ability to maintain stock and expansion, as reported by Interview 2. Furthermore, many cultural women reported a lack of institutional support; they are often being ignored or excluded from formal bank loan systems due to a perception that they lack high profit potential.

Cash flow is a constant struggle, made worse by customers who order products but never actually pay up. Interview 4 pointed this out as a major reason for the financial hits these businesses take. On top of that, there is a total lack of real help from the government. Even though officials constantly talk about 'preserving culture,' Interview 9 noted that this talk never turns into actual funding or business support for the women doing the work.5.5.2 Sourcing, Tools, and Cultural Erosion.

These businesses are being squeezed from all sides, starting with a changing environment. Droughts and disappearing forests mean women have to trek miles just to find what they need, dragging their transport costs way up (Interview 13). Even when they source the materials, they’re forced to rely on slow, manual tools like wooden pestles simply because they don’t have access to modern equipment. But the real friction is social. Many of these entrepreneurs are dealing with deep emotional stress or public criticism because the community still sees their labour as 'men’s work', .making their work a balancing act between making ends meet and dealing with constant local pushback.

5.5.2 Work-Life Imbalance and Burnout

These women find themselves into conflicting situations. On one side, they're trying to build a business, but on the other, there's massive cultural pressure to stay home and be a 'proper' caretaker. One woman in Interview 3 talked about how this causes a lot of heat at home, leading to non-stop arguments with family members who just don't get it. When they stay out late or travel for work, the neighbors don't see a successful entrepreneur they see a mother neglecting her house. It's exhausting. Sometimes this pressure even turns into physical fights, which leaves these women too drained to actually focus on their shops. At the end of the day, it's these rigid gender roles not a lack of skill that really keep their businesses from ever truly taking off.

5.5.3 Conclusion

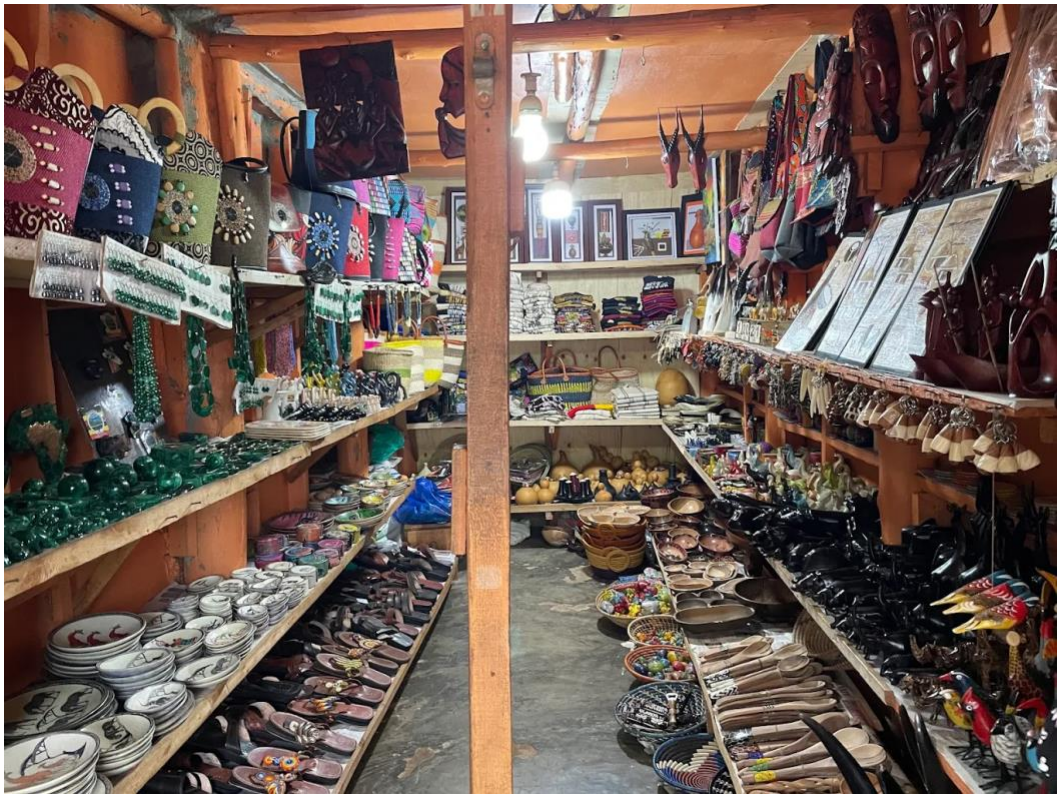
We conclude the presentation of our empirical findings, which we systematically organised into four primary themes and eleven distinct sub-themes that address the study's set research questions. The analysis established that women cultural entrepreneurs strategically depended on social networks to manage their operations within a severely constrained institutional environment.

The findings confirmed a connection between themes: the existing sustainability problems (Theme 5.5) that need strategic actions that are noted in the other three areas. Specifically, the data revealed a purposeful Resource Mobilization (Theme 5.2), where social ties were directly converted into both tangible assets and vital intangible resources, such as knowledge and stabilized supply chains.

Resource mobilization was strongly supported, shown in the form of community support (Theme 5.3); here, active participation of women earned them legitimacy, helped in collective risk-taking, and offered relevant support for continuity. In addition, the use of cultural preservation (Theme 5.4) served as a unique business resource, increasing product value and building customer trust in communities where formal market structures were absent.

These interconnected empirical realities collectively establish the vital role of informal social strategies in determining how women cultural entrepreneurs mobilize resources and secure sustainability in Central Uganda.

Image: Craft Market in Kampala



Source: Google Maps contributor (n.d.). Photos of craft market, Kampala, Uganda.

6. Analysis

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the empirical findings gathered from fifteen women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda. Our main research interest was to explore how such women entrepreneurs recognize, mobilize and use various resources to sustain their businesses and cultures under conditions of absent formal support structures and limited access to capital. In answering our research question, we use the resource-based view (RBV) and selected components of social capital theory as our analytic tools. These lenses allow us to examine not only the particular resources that the women rely upon, but the processes by which resources are designed, transmitted, challenged, or adapted in often informal settings.

This analysis builds directly on the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 3 that integrates the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Capital Theory (SCT) to examine resource mobilization in culturally embedded contexts. By applying these lenses systematically, we aim to extend the existing literature on women's entrepreneurship in the Global South (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Kabeer, 1999) and cultural entrepreneurship (Khaire, 2017; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019), while addressing the research gaps acknowledged in Chapter 2 regarding how women strategically navigate resource constraints.

Analysis for the current work is grounded in the accounts and the real lived experiences of the respondents in semi-structured interviews. Respondents offered detailed accounts during interviews and interviews were conducted in English and Luganda languages with notes translated as appropriately as possible. To maintain ethical research practices and protect respondents' confidentiality, the analysis does not use actual names. Instead, all respondents are anonymized by a coding system from P01 through to P15. The use of that strategy ensures protection of the women's identity

while it enables valid linking of quotes and emerging patterns to individual experiences, points of views and contextual nuance.

We used thematic analysis through a systematic and iterative coding approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Following translation and transcriptions of interviews, open coding was done to attempt to reveal initial categories of importance. These were then organized and narrowed into broader themes that encompassed repeated varieties and insights of the data. Rather than selecting material into narrow categories, we hope to maintain the richness and depth of the women's voices by including extracts that shed light upon lived experiences, contradictions, and subtle interpretations.

Table 6.1 below represents the six identified themes to our research question and theoretical frameworks, ensuring analytical consistency between the empirical findings, research objectives and theoretical perspectives.

Table 6.1: Thematic Structure Aligned with Research Questions

Section	Theoretical Lens	Key Focus
1. Cultural knowledge as intangible assets	RBV (VRIO framework)	How traditional knowledge functions as rare, inimitable resource
2. Resource constraints and tactical innovation	RBV (Dynamic capabilities)	How scarcity drives adaptive innovation
3. Social and kinship networks as pools of resources	SCT (Bonding/bridging capital)	How networks enable resource access
4. Authenticity versus commodification	RBV + SCT (Cultural resource paradox)	Negotiating tradition and market demands
5. Gendered roles, power, and leadership	Gendered RBV/SCT	How gender shapes resource access
6. Spirituality, resilience, and identity	RBV (Intangible resources)	Non-economic dimensions as resources

Our analysis is informed by two theoretical frameworks. Firstly, the Resource-Based View (RBV) allows for examination of how women cultural entrepreneurs perceive and take advantage of tangible and intangible resources. These resources include natural resources, crafts technology, cultural knowledge, spiritual power, and storytelling traditions. We use RBV concepts like valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991, 2000) to explain how these resources boost sustainability and endurance of entrepreneurship.

Secondly, the social capital theory facilitates comprehension of the integration of these entrepreneurs within community ties, familial networks, and informal economic systems. We specifically focus on how women utilize bonding capital (such as support from family and neighbours) and bridging capital (including links to customers, social media platforms, or non-governmental organizations). These types of capital serve as enabling resources, frequently in situations where formal institutional assistance is lacking (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000; Portes, 1998).

Our central aim is not to assess these women's businesses according to mainstream financial criteria, but to look into the socio-cultural rationale and everyday practices that influence their activities. Under these terms, cultural entrepreneurship is at the same time means of survival and a vehicle of expression, retention, and transformation of identity. Therefore, the analysis purports to translate their activities as innovative, planned, and culturally rooted, in spite of possible difference with mainstream definitions of entrepreneurship.

The analysis therefore examines entrepreneurship as a relational, spiritual and cultural process rather than an economic behavior alone.

In the following sections, six overriding themes that emerged from the data are outlined. These themes were selected for their depth, regularity, and analytic significance for answering the research question. While for clarity they are discussed individually, they interrelate and sometimes overlap, thus revealing the complexities that are part of everyday life and business lives. The six identified themes are as follows:

1. Cultural knowledge as intangible assets
2. Resource constraints and tactical innovation
3. Social and kinship networks as pools of resources

4. Authenticity versus commodification
5. Gendered roles, power, and leadership in cultural work
6. Spirituality, resilience, and identity as business assets

Each section also contains the detailed analysis, relevant participant quotes (coded), and reference to the theoretical frameworks. We also incorporate tables and pictorial representation as needed to reveal thematic relationships and patterns.

6.2 Cultural knowledge as intangible asset

Drawing on the Resource-Based View (RBV), we analyze cultural knowledge as an intangible asset possessing VRIO (valuable, rare, inimitable, non-substitutable) characteristics (Barney, 1991). Simultaneously the Social Capital Theory helps explain how this knowledge gains economic value through social validation processes (Bourdieu, 1986).

One of the prominent and core resources indicated in this study is the cultural knowledge of the respondents. This includes traditional teachings, oral traditions, spiritual points of view, symbolic procedures, and embodied techniques passed down through generations. For many of the women engaged in the interviews, cultural knowledge is not merely something appended to their businesses; it is instead the underlying asset from which their entrepreneurial identity and operations originate. Using the context of Resource-Based View (RBV), this kind of knowledge is labelled as intangible, often rare, deeply ingrained, and difficult to replicate, thus giving these women a unique position in the informal and cultural economy of Uganda.

This finding extends on the literature on women's entrepreneurship in the Global South that emphasizes the strategic importance of culturally embedded resources (Minniti & Naudé, 2010; Kabeer, 1999), while contributing to cultural entrepreneurship studies that examines authenticity as a competitive resource (Khaire, 2017; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019).

During the interviews, women described that they obtained their crafts, rituals, or knowledge by extended exposure, oral transmission, or spiritual call. Some knowledge was directly obtained from kin such as mothers or grandmothers to the women, yet other insights came from apprenticeship, watching, or being chosen by spirits. For instance, P03 noted:

> *My grandmother was a Ssenga [a paternal aunt of the genre of initiating girls into womanhood]. I was brought up hearing her talk of marriage, hygiene, and domestic roles. I assisted her from the age of 12. That is what I now do.*

Here, knowledge transmission is intimate and observed. It is not from school learning but from experience of culturally sanctioned roles. The quote also reveals that often, cultural entrepreneurship has its roots in trust from generation to generation and identity rather than market potential.

This is consistent with the RBV conceptualization of resources developed internally over time that are deep-rooted in routine and experience and difficult for competitors to replicate. For instance, P09, who offers birth attendant services and makes herbal concoctions, described said:

> *Things that I do cannot be taught at school. It was shown to me little by little. Some came through dreams, others through explanations of older women when I was ready.*

That knowledge is safeguarded not only by tradition but by belief structures and religious legitimacy, placing additional exclusivity and cultural significance upon it. That is similar to the concept of exclusivity from RBV: even if someone else attempted to replicate those services, they would not possess the inherent knowledge and legitimacy to reproduce it to the same effect.

Moreover, cultural knowledge has a double role to play in these businesses. First, it provides competitive advantage; the reputation of carrying real and trusted knowledge attracts clients as well as earns community respect. Secondly, it also poses limitations, primarily when businesses feel forced to be innovative or to accommodate unfamiliar demographics. For example, P11, who teaches old dance techniques, explained:

> *I know which dance belongs to which clan and when it is supposed to be performed. But nowadays people want it fast and short. They want a show, not the meaning.*

This conflict reveals the difficult position of cultural entrepreneurs. As much as knowledge is a distinct asset, its retention is sometimes at odds with the obligations of commodified culture consumption. Nevertheless, most of the respondents stated they

had an overriding sense of obligation to retain cultural value, showing that cultural sustainability is an individual and professional decision.

To exemplify the manner in which cultural knowledge is disseminated across various entrepreneurial sectors, we introduce the subsequent table:

Table 6.2: Examples of Cultural Knowledge Resources by Entrepreneurial Field

Field	Examples of Cultural Knowledge	Participant Codes
Herbal Medicine	Use of local plants, preparation techniques, dosage rituals	P05, P06, P09
Birth and Reproductive Support	Massage techniques, dietary advice, fertility rituals	P01, P07, P14
Traditional Ssenga Roles	Marriage preparation, relationship advice, gender norms	P03, P10, P15
Performance & Dance	Clan dances, meaning of movements, initiation ceremonies	P04, P11, P13
Crafts & Clothing	Bark cloth preparation, symbolism in beads and colors	P02, P08, P12

These findings show what we term the "cultural resource paradox" introduced in our theoretical framework. This is that cultural knowledge simultaneously enables entrepreneurial diversity while constraining the commercial adaptation. This contributes to RBV by showing that resource value depends not only on technical characteristics but on social validation processes, aligning with Social Capital Theory's emphasis on network-based legitimacy (Portes, 1998; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

For all of these areas, knowledge is dynamic; it changes over context, necessity, and subjective interpretation. As an example, P08, who make cultural clothes, indicated that she applies traditional designs while adapting the material for use in today's clientele:

We don't use the same cloth as mothers. These days, I look for the closest, but yet I still have the skill of cutting and stitching.

This shows the dynamic capabilities side of RBV: adjusting and reshaping internal resources so that value is maintained even in spite of environmental change. Cultural knowledge thus is not only transmitted in a rigid way but is also a dynamic resource that women deploy in innovative and intentional ways.

According to the social capital theory, cultural knowledge is also socially sanctioned. It gains value upon endorsement by peer groups, elders, or clients. Those businesses known for "doing things the right way" capture more clients, alluding to the value that trust, reputation, and embeddedness add to this resource. Here, the theory of social capital and the RBV complement each other to show that cultural knowledge is not so much what one knows, but who endorses it and under what conditions.

Cultural knowledge is therefore a basic asset of women's cultural entrepreneurship in Uganda. Though invisible, it has a substantive impact; it is accessed through relational processes, secured through religious procedures and used through deliberate intent. The genuineness and depth of such knowledge grant women legitimate and a distinguishing space in the competitive and dynamic market.

While previous studies have described cultural knowledge as intangible, these findings reveal that it only becomes economically valuable when socially legitimised by community endorsement, which extends the existing understanding of cultural resources beyond skill possession alone.

However, like discussed in the next section, intangible resources often come into contact with tangible challenges and constraints that call for innovation and adaptability.

6.3 Resource Constraints and Tactical Innovation

This theme addresses the research question in terms of how entrepreneurs overcome resource limitations. Drawing on RBV's dynamic capabilities perspective (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997) and the concept of bricolage (Baker & Nelson, 2005), we examine how limitations stimulate innovation in resource constrained environments.

Social Capital Theory helps explain how networks facilitate resource sharing and adaptation (Granovetter, 1973; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

While cultural knowledge and embedded tradition give women's cultural entrepreneurship in Central Uganda a resilient foundation, many of these women experience recurring resource constraints. These comprise restricted access to financial capital, necessary raw materials, appropriate production facilities, marketing structures and formal knowledge. Nonetheless the women exhibit crucial strategic innovation in handling scarcity. Their "making do" is that identified by the Resource-Based View (RBV) as dynamic capabilities, the ability to integrate, adapt, and reconfigure resources under the influence of changing conditions (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997).

For the majority of the respondents, capital is the largest barrier. The majority of them are not qualified to get formal loans or grants and therefore they rely on rotating saving circles (VSLAs), taking loans from their own relatives, or reinvesting meagre profits. P01 making concoctions for women's reproductive health said that:

> *When I started out, I didn't own anything. I was using cups and saucepans from my mum's kitchen. I could not even afford nice bottles and packaging.*

Instead of allowing this to deter her, she started out by utilizing salvaged plastic containers from friends. Though not perfect, it enabled her to start out and slowly build exposure. As she went on, she was able to save up enough to purchase standard bottles and branded stickers to enhance the professional appearance of products.

Recycling and substituting was another widespread approach utilized by respondents. Conventional methods typically depended on certain resources such as bark cloth, cowrie shells, banana strings, or herbs which are now becoming limited through urbanization, environmental degradation, or higher prices. P12, a craftsman skilled in old-style garment making, explained her use of imported cloth after her loss of access to bark cloth:

> *Bark cloth is costly and seasonal. Nowadays I use cotton that is of similar brown dye and texture; however, I still use the old stitch patterns and the original meaning is maintained.*

This case is representative of subtle innovation, not simply imitation but modifying while retaining essence. Such improvising addresses the RBV concept of resource arrangement, where the entrepreneur reshuffles customary resources to retain output and originality.

Apart from availability of materials, women also faced infrastructural hurdles such as lack of workshop space, storage, and transportation. Some of the respondents noted that they operate from their households or temporary stalls at the market. P06, trading in herbal powders stated that:

> *I keep my herbs under the bed and in kitchen cupboards. I dry them on mats outside. It's not perfect, but it works.*

This physical limitation affects not only the production but also aspects of presentation and scale. However, instead of waiting for favourable conditions, these women tend to initiate and accommodate plans in real-time. Such entrepreneurship questions Western concepts of "preparedness" and, instead, identifies resourcefulness within constraints, itself in agreement with Baker and Nelson's (2005) bricolage theory, extending the Resource-Based View (RBV) for informal and under-resourced environments.

Women innovate product designs as well, often modifying their cultural products to meet client needs or changing tastes. P04, the traditional performer, described how she shortened her performing for non-Baganda clients and gave an explanation that:

> *People don't need hour-long ceremonials. People require something short with meaning. I now preview the dance in advance, so even outsiders can connect.*

This demonstrates not only customer-oriented consideration but also strategic market adaptability. Sense, seize, and transform in the context of change at the environmental or customer level is the sign of dynamic capabilities by RBV.

To describe these adaptive methods more clearly, the following simplified comparison table is given:

Table 6.2: Examples of Resource Constraints and Tactical Innovations

Type of Constraint	Common Challenge	Tactical Innovation	Participant Codes
Financial Capital	No access to loans or business grants	Use of VSLAs, reinvestment of small profits	P01, P05, P14
Material Access	Scarce or costly traditional items (e.g., bark cloth)	Substitution with similar or modern materials	P02, P12, P13
Production Space	No workshop or storage	Use of homes, shared spaces, community centers	P06, P08
Transport & Distribution	Inability to reach clients outside immediate area	Use of boda bodas, customer pickups, word-of-mouth	P07, P09, P15
Client Expectations	Desire for faster, modernized versions of products	Adjustments in design, packaging, timing	P03, P04, P11

These findings contribute to the literature on women's entrepreneurship in the Global South that documents how constraints shape entrepreneurial strategies (Minniti & Naudé, 2010; Mead & Liedholm, 1998). Unlike mainstream literature that frames scarcity as a barrier to entrepreneurial growth (Aterido, Beck & Iacovone, 2013), these results show that constraints actively generate new forms of culturally rooted innovation, suggesting that improvisation can be a strategic advantage rather than a response to deprivation.

Although respondents rarely identified themselves as lacking, they identified themselves as constantly adjusting, coming up with solutions by means of internal strengths as well as external connections. In the words of P10:

> *We have to find a way. If I don't have, I begin. If I wait to be prepared, I will never start.*

This approach relates to a psychological asset that, albeit invisible, is the foundation of various profound choices and innovative adoptions. From the perspective of RBV, such internal motivation, resilience, improvisation, and emotional labour that is used works as a useful internal asset.

Further, some participants utilized relationships with consumers as informal innovation feedback. These social inputs led them to alter recipes, cloth designs, or

phrases. These became external knowledge acquisition processes, RBV-compatible means of boosting competitive capability even in informal industries.

In short, the theme demonstrates that resource scarcity is not just a barrier, it acts as a springboard to innovation and creativity. The women cultural entrepreneurs of Central Uganda constantly undertake strategic adaptation, turning constraints into new methods, products, and business concepts. From such a point of view, limitations of resources are not barriers but catalysts of locally based, culturally appropriate entrepreneurship.

This analysis adds to the RBV's dynamic framework by showing how culturally embedded forms of resilience and adaptation function as strategic resources in informal economies. It also contributes to Social Capital Theory by showing how networks not only provide resources but also facilitate knowledge exchange and innovation validation within culturally specific contexts.

6.4 Social and Kinship Networks as Pools of Resources

This theme addresses market access strategies and beneficial network support. Drawing on Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000), we analyze how networks function as resource infrastructures in contexts of institutional weakness. This adds to the literature on women's entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa that emphasizes network reliance (Brush et al., 2009; Jamali, 2009) while contributing to RBV by showing how relational assets enhance resource mobility.

In the absence of formal institutional support, access to credit opportunities, or structured markets, the women cultural entrepreneurs interviewed kept mentioning the importance of their social and kinship networks. These networks, comprised of kinship ties, religious groups, women's associations, and loyal clients, not only function as mechanisms of support but also as key sources of tangible and intangible resources.

Drawing upon social capital theory, it could be argued that such networks constitute varieties of capital embedded in relations, trust, and mutual norms Lin (2001). Here, social capital manifests itself in two main varieties: bonding capital, described in terms of strong ties within close-knit circles like extended families and local leaders; and

bridging capital, dealing with connections to more distant or diverse players like customers, developmental stakeholders, or distant urban markets.

This network reliance aligns with findings from studies on women entrepreneurs in developing contexts who often depend more heavily on informal networks than men due to structural exclusion from formal economic systems (Brush, 1992; Greve & Salaff, 2003).

For the women, initial resources utilized to establish businesses were directly obtained from kinship relationships. Apart from simple monetary contributions, they received emotional encouragement, handed-down machinery, sharing of office space, and word of mouth to target markets. P07, extending services to women through reproductive health activities, commented that:

> *My mother handed me her herbal vessels and her backyard to approach women. And she didn't stop at that. She informed people that I was reliable. That is how I secured my first clients.*

Here, we see that trust is not self-generated but socially conferred, rooted in reputation passed through kin. This has implications for RBV, as reputation and community validation become intangible assets, non-transferable and unique to individuals embedded in specific networks.

Women relied upon relationships with elders and ties to their own communities to sustain businesses. P09, a master of storytelling and traditional poetry, explained that:

> *When I don't have a client, my neighbor calls me to come and help her prepare food for occasions. That's how we trade. It's all not necessarily financial.*

As can be interpreted from this case, reciprocity and mutual aid in tight-knit social circles signify exchange of resources. The exchange facilitates social cohesion while making practical sense of business volatility.

Furthermore, participants often highlighted the significance of savings and lending groups (VSLAs) which are informal financial collectives at the village level, typically consisting of women. These organizations offered not only financial resources but also

education, motivation, and social standing within the community. P02, an artisan specializing in cultural jewellery, remarked that:

> *By being part of the women's group, I was given access to a loan to purchase beads. But more importantly, I was advised on points of sales, points of price, and how to handle demanding customers.*

Here, it is apparent that social capital does not grant access to capital only but to knowledge, to capabilities, and to emotional strategies as well, extending the scope of resources that the entrepreneur has access to. In RBV, they are organizational capabilities that are derived not of internal processes alone but of embeddedness into collective life.

To make it easier to represent the diversification of social resources utilized by the women, the following table is presented:

Table 6.4: Key Social Networks and Their Resource Contributions

Type of Network	Nature of Support Provided	Examples from Participants
Family Members	Emotional encouragement, start-up materials, reputation endorsement	P01, P07, P10
Peer Entrepreneurs	Informal advice, skill-sharing, material borrowing	P02, P09, P14
Community Elders	Legitimacy for cultural roles, moral authority	P03, P05, P13
Religious Groups	Crisis support, moral encouragement	P05, P06
Village Savings Groups	Access to capital, collective marketing, accountability	P02, P04, P11
Repeat Clients	Word-of-mouth promotion, feedback, expansion into new circles	P08, P12, P15

Our findings contribute to the debate about whether social networks enable business survival but constrain growth (Liedholm, 2002; Robson & Obeng, 2008). While the participants' strong ties provided essential support, they also imposed obligations that

limited strategic autonomy, particularly regarding gendered expectations of reciprocity and care (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Kabeer, 1999).

Also notable is the way social networks handle risk and uncertainty. For example, P13, who is in charge of preparing ceremonial attire and foodstuffs, said:

> *When I don't know whether to trust a person from the beginning, I ask someone that does. If no one does, then I say no. Client-oriented business is transacted through trust.*

This illustrates the phenomenon of social filtering in transactions, where interpersonal relationships govern economic exchanges. In this context, social capital functions as a safeguarding element, mitigating losses and regulating exposure to unpredictable markets.

In times of failure or crisis, social networks became the sources of strength. Women indicated that they could rely on their kin, the co-members of their groups, or spiritual leaders during instances of sickness, theft or market downturns.

Participant P05, who is operating a traditional medical clinic, had this to say:

> *When my hut burned, the women of my church came and assisted me in rebuilding. I didn't ask, they came.*

This unsolicited aid shows that religious and communal ties are resources kept alive by non-commercial based principles of care and mutual duty.

In addition, respondents acknowledged that functional relationships involve social engagement, participation at social events, demonstration of support to those in need, and respect for the old. While these activities are not monetized, they are valuable to continued access to social capital in the long run.

From the RBV perspective, social networks may be seen as an extended infrastructure that facilitates utilization of more mainstream resources. If social networks do not exist, knowledge of culture, tools, and techniques may be made useless or invisible. Mobilization of social capital is therefore not something distinct from entrepreneurship but is fundamental to it.

This theme adds to the Social Capital Theory by showing how network value depends on gender position and cultural context, while also contributing to RBV by

demonstrating how relational assets enhance the deployment of other resources. Unlike many studies that portray social networks primarily as means for financial access or market entry (Nichter & Goldmark, 2009), this analysis reveals that in cultural entrepreneurship, networks function crucially as mechanisms of moral validation that determine who is permitted to practise and transmit cultural knowledge.

Lastly, the theme shows that the mobilization of resources in cultural entrepreneurship is relational by nature. The women in question are not solo agents as such, but part of intertwined networks that define their access to markets, information, support, and legitimacy. Such networks become resources pools, providing stability in volatile worlds. The interaction of bonding and bridging social capital shows that entrepreneurship endurance is innately social in structures, rather than individually centered.

6.5 Authenticity vs. commodification dilemma

This theme addresses the role of culture in business and strategies for balancing authenticity with business demands. Drawing on literature that frames authenticity as a socially constructed and negotiated attribute (Peterson, 2005; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019), we analyze how women cultural entrepreneurs perform and maintain authenticity within market contexts.

One of the underlying tensions that is repeated by many of the respondents is that of how to balance authenticity with the requirement to fulfill market needs. This theme points to the requirement for cultural practices, by definition immersed in tradition, culture, and identity must often be reshaped or even diluted in order to remain viable and profitable under changing economic circumstances. The balancing act between staying true to cultural origins and modifying products or services for commercial consumption emerged as a source of both innovation and internal conflict.

Here, authenticity is not just tradition or cultural propriety. It is equivalent to spiritual value, clan custom, and ancestral authority. Some of the respondents again emphasized the religious value of their undertaking and of being custodians of culture and not just of business. P04, the choreographer of the customary Buganda dance, stated:

> *These dances are not just for entertainment. Each one has a reason. Some are for weddings, others for calling rain. But now people want quick shows with drums only.*

Here, the specific cultural feature and religious value of the practice are at odds with the consumer's preference for convenience or amusement. This point raises the question of the commodification problem, transforming culture into something that can be marketed yet maintaining its inherent significance.

From a Resource-Based View perspective, that issue can be examined in terms of value and non-substitutability. Cultural authenticity provides the women with a particular competitive edge, something that cannot be easily substituted by rivals. Their products/services become valuable as they are seen to be authentic. But when markets grow and client bases become more diversified (e.g., from rural community members to city consumers or NGOs), additional pressure is felt to standardize or westernize.

This reflects to broader debates in cultural entrepreneurship literature between perspectives that view commercialization as enabling cultural preservation (Khaire, 2017) versus those warning of cultural dilution and exploitation (Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Meissner, 2021). Our findings reveal how Ugandan women navigate this through context-specific strategies.

For example, P11, who instructs boys for initiation rites, said that:

> *I would train for an entire week with the children. Now, some of the mothers want me to train in two hours. I feel that I cheat the ancestors.*

This quote highlights the possibility of conflict between commercialization and maintaining individual and spiritual integrity. The product under consideration, deep ritual knowledge and advice, is not only non-replaceable but also limited by moral requirements. Any change of the ritual for the sake of material benefit may damage the core that makes the service unique.

Whereas for others, adaptation came more easily as a matter of practical need. P13, in charge of preparing typical dishes for celebrations, stated:

> *Today I blend old and new recipes. Some of the clients want chips alongside millet bread. I don't care as long as they know whether it is old or new.*

This quote demonstrates a flexible approach to authenticity, where the cultural entrepreneur reframes adaptation not as dilution but as strategic inclusion. This aligns with RBV's dynamic capability concept: the ability to transform resources (in this case, cultural offerings) in response to market expectations while maintaining a core identity.

The challenge even extends to language and symbolism. Those sharing performance, storytelling, or ritual services usually discussed code-switching where they abbreviate or interprete their language for those unfamiliar with local signifiers. P03 explained:

> *When interacting with urban girls during Ssenga interviews, I alter the terms used. I do not use advanced Luganda terms. I also omit some of the material that may tend to embarrass. However, I attempt to maintain the underlying message.*

Here, cultural translation is itself resource management. What is retained, adapted, or dropped is itself a tradeoff between real voice and market sensibility. The process is not merely economic. It is emotional and ethical, and it necessitates judgement and reflexivity.

To better understand the ways through which women handle such conflict, the following table is presented below:

Table 6.5: Responses to the Authenticity–Commodification Dilemma

Response Strategy	**Description**	**Participants (examples)**
Cultural Preservation	Refuse to alter practices despite market pressure	P01, P04, P10
Selective Adaptation	Modify delivery, language, or packaging, but keep core intact	P03, P11, P13
Blended Innovation	Mix traditional and modern elements to widen appeal	P02, P06, P12
Market Prioritization	Prioritize client demands over traditional norms	P08, P14, P15

These strategies show what Meissner (2021) describes as "narratives of authenticity" in postcolonial contexts, where cultural entrepreneurs must negotiate between community expectations and market demands. Our findings extend this by showing how gender adds another layer to authenticity performance, as women often face additional expectations to embody cultural legitimacy (Ahl & Marlow, 2012).

These strategies show that authenticity is not an entrenched viewpoint, but rather a negotiated affair. Some of these women prioritize spiritual integrity; others operate out of economic necessity while many attempt to reconcile the two. Common to all, though, is the awareness of the trade-off. No participant discussed casually adjusting their practice. Not even those embracing innovation were unaware of what was being lost or transformed.

This implies a wider comprehension: cultural entrepreneurship in this context is more than just the preservation of history. It is the rewriting of history according to the conditions of the times. The women at play here are not mere passive transmitters of culture, but active interpreters of value, worth, and relevance. Their actions demonstrate the perennial conflict between cultural reference points and economic insertion, and it is in that conflict that much of their creativity, autonomy and resourcefulness is situated.

From the perspective of RBV, authenticity is a vulnerable yet valuable resource. Its strength is to be unique, internalized, and credible, yet its value is subject to depreciation by commercial pressure unless carefully managed. The respondents' handling of the dilemma is evidence of their capability of putting into play dynamic capabilities not only in adapting resources but also in judgment of culture and identity work.

This finding challenges earlier work that associates authenticity with mere tradition preservation (Beverland, 2005), showing instead that authenticity is strategically negotiated and sustained through selective adaptation, rather than rigid protection or full commercialisation.

The authenticity-commodification dilemma appears to create an important paradox of women's cultural entrepreneurship: they would be forced to sacrifice the elements of their work that make it meaningful in order to make it financially sustainable. It is in how they negotiate that trade-off that we can behold their business acumen as well as

their deep engagement with the social, moral, and even spiritual elements of their craftsmanship.

6.6 Gendered Roles, Power, and Leadership in Cultural Work

One of the prominent themes that emerges from the interviews is that of the role of gender expectations and power relations in the lives of women cultural entrepreneurs. Though these women are leaders of their communities, guardians of indigenous knowledge, and economic agents in themselves, they tend to work in extremely patriarchal cultural organizations that empower and yet constrain their entrepreneurial agency. While discussing it, we look into how gendered roles, power hierarchies and resistances and leadership affect their daily cultural work.

As per the Resource-Based View (RBV) approach, social roles e.g., that of respected elder, spiritual guide can be interpreted as intangible resources that confer legitimacy and trust. But these roles are rarely devoid of bias. Gendered power relationships, as respondents have indicated, influence not only the allocation of cultural authority, but also the individuals capable of owning, remaking or selling cultural knowledge.

For example, many of the participants pointed out that certain cultural practices belong to men historically, and that women's access to these sites requires them to earn legitimacy twice. Once as practitioners and again as women transgressing established boundaries. P05, who is a practitioner of traditional healing and herbalism, described:

> *Men say I can't blend herbs because I didn't learn from a head herbalist. My grandmother was. But they don't reckon her because she was a woman.*

This quote highlights the patriarchal dissemination of knowledge as a means of exclusion, often devaluing knowledge that is matriarchal. While cultural capital is passed down, its recognition is gender sensitive and thus women's ability to claim their right to entrepreneurship is affected.

Also, the world of ritual and ceremonial authority is characterized by conflict. P10, who assists in giving birth, narrated experiences of opposition when assuming leadership during naming ceremonies, previously monopolized by male elders:

> *If I speak during the ceremony, men become uncomfortable. Men want me to be quiet. But the mothers insist that I need to speak because they know that I help them.*

This is proof of how women's authority is commonly validated from below, peers and clients, instead of from institutional structures or from hierarchies. In RBV terms, social credibility, if supported by trust from the community, becomes a non-formal but powerful resource that sustains the enterprise.

Regardless of limitations, individuals created ways of manoeuvring through or challenging gendered constraints. Some of them capitalised upon culturally assigned symbolic roles for women like caregivers, counsellors, or spiritual mediators. These offered legitimate bases from which to extend services without confronting male authority head-on. Other individuals became more confrontational, openly reclaiming women's space in cultural heritages. P03, a Ssenga (cultural aunt), stated:

> *Being Ssenga is not rebellion, it is tradition. But I make it modern. I tell girls about their rights, their bodies, and also their power.*

This position of recognizing tradition and also integrating empowerment demonstrates a type of transformative leadership grounded in cultural continuity. In this context, gender serves not merely as a limitation. Rather, it emerges as a space for negotiation and resilience.

To capture these diversified experiences, we constructed a table that outlines the role of gendered roles in leadership and power relationships between entrepreneurs:

Table 6.6: Gendered Pathways to Leadership in Cultural Entrepreneurship

Pathway	Description	Participants	Related Resources
Inherited Female Roles	Accepted positions such as Ssenga, herbalist, birth helper	P03, P05, P10	Community trust, ancestral validation
Challenging Male Dominance	Claiming roles typically held by men	P04, P06	Resilience, symbolic authority, performance skills

Strategic Compliance	Adapting behavior to meet gender norms without full conflict	P01, P12, P13	Social harmony, client retention
Empowerment through Education	Reframing traditional roles with gender rights messages	P03, P11	Knowledge, language skills, public speaking
Silent Resistance	Quietly redefining boundaries through consistent action	P07, P09, P14	Credibility, moral authority, loyal clientele

This supports what Kabeer (1999) describes as "bargaining with patriarchy" strategies women use to negotiate better positions within existing gender systems rather than overtly challenging them. It adds to gender and entrepreneurship literature that examines how women navigate patriarchal constraints while building enterprises (Bullough et al., 2022; Jamali, 2009).

More significantly, a lot of women identified themselves as role models to younger women and girls and characterized their activities as leadership. P11, the organizer of ceremonies for adolescent girls, said:

> *My work is not just cultural. It is to prepare girls to be strong, to know themselves, and to be proud of where they come from.*

This shows there is more than the economic side as it links entrepreneurship to social reproduction, identity, and culture transmission. In doing so, the women are doing more than just passing through gendered roles. They redefine them afresh in entrepreneurial contexts.

From the RBV perspective, such leadership and mentoring actions can be perceived as capacity development. By sharing knowledge, teaching others and creating societal norms, the women expand their own influence and build relational capital that enhances their businesses' sustainability.

At the same time, problems persist. Some participants admitted to practicing self-censorship, avoiding topics or services that they felt were too bold. Some others mentioned experiences of internal criticism from senior women or religious leaders

who deemed their activities improper. This highlights the fact that gendered power relations are not only of men dominating women but also run laterally even among women themselves and are shaped by generation values, social and economic background and morality.

Unlike previous research that often frames patriarchy only as a constraint (Aterido, Beck & Iacovone, 2013), the findings here illustrate how women tactically appropriate gendered expectations to build authority, suggesting that leadership emerges through negotiation rather than confrontation.

Overall, gender role dynamics and power relationships are at the forefront of cultural entrepreneurship. They are forces that define women's access to use of and conversion of resources. Their ability to operate as leaders under those constraints demonstrates their strategic handling of gendered spaces. Through displaying resiliency, adaptability, and redrawing of boundaries, they build intangible, yet essential portfolios of resources based upon trust, legitimacy, and cultural competence. These are things that may not appear in balance sheets yet are at the foundation of their success.

6.7 Spirituality, Resilience, and Identity as Business Assets

This theme addresses resource identification and value contribution. Drawing on RBV's recognition of intangible resources (Barney, 1991; Hall, 1992) and literature on indigenous entrepreneurship , we analyze how spirituality, resilience and identity work as strategic assets in culturally embedded contexts. Social Capital Theory helps explain how these resources gain economic value through social recognition and relational validation.

From the respondents, the lines between religious beliefs, cultural beliefs, and business activities often become blurred. The theme here explores how spirituality, resilience, and identity operate not only as internal capacities but also as embedded resources for shaping entrepreneurial outcomes, client relationships, and the longer-term sustainability of their businesses. These elements, intangible as they may be, operate as powerful drivers of meaning, purpose and trust, hence assuming a pivotal role in making sense of the practice of cultural entrepreneurship under this specific context.

Some of the participants noted that they are called by spiritual beings such as ancestral beings, spirit callings, or religious beliefs. P01, a practicing member of women helping individuals with birthing, healing, and naming ceremonies, described as follows:

> *I was chosen by the spirits in my dream. I was not chosen by myself to do this work. It was given to me. If I refuse, negative things happen to me in my life.*

Here, spirituality is something more than belief; it is a source of legitimacy, non-negotiable calling and a guide to action. From the Resource-Based View (RBV) perspective, such spiritual calling is path-dependent resource as it cannot be bought, taught, or transferred; it is only lived. This exclusivity increases its non-substitutability, placing the entrepreneur at the unique position in her industry.

Other respondents termed spirituality as a means of attaining resilience, a means of approaching personal loss, economic insecurity, or social conflict. P08, who designs outfits for funerals and sings during burials, said:

> *When I dress the dead, I pray. I don't see it as work. It is a service to the spirit. Even if I'm not paid, I know blessings will come.*

This statement discloses a system of spiritual returns that runs outside market logic. Acts of service generate not only economic returns but moral and spiritual credit, which may manifest in social respect, referrals, or divine favour. In this case, the entrepreneur's role is not merely that of seller of goods and services, but that of ritual actor, healer, and moral agent.

At the same time, it is crucial to recognize the emotional work involved in these roles. Many women described that the work they do is heavily taxing, especially when they are dealing with matters of bereavement, health problems or spiritual attacks. But they pointed out that their endurance shaped by past hardships, collective hardships, and inherited strength allows them to hold out. P12, a spiritual advisor that works through storytelling, stated:

> *Things have happened to me. Poverty, violence, even being run out of the house. But I persevered. These tales that I tell are not from books, they are from survival.*

Here, narrative is an asset. Having survived adversity brings credibility and emotional resonance to her service. Clients trust her not only for reasons of technical competence,

but for her lived experience. Her identity which is based upon survival is a kind of cultural capital that supports business value.

To better visualize how these abstract elements contribute to successful entrepreneurship, the following table is presented:

Table 6.7: Intangible Resources in Cultural Entrepreneurship

Intangible Resource	**Function in the Enterprise**	**Participant Examples**
Spiritual Authority	Legitimates offerings, attracts clients through trust and calling	P01, P05, P08
Personal Resilience	Enables persistence despite hardship or instability	P06, P10, P12
Cultural Identity	Builds customer loyalty and authenticity	P02, P04, P09
Storytelling/Narrative	Humanizes the entrepreneur and builds emotional connection	P03, P12, P15

Another significant point is the way identity is negotiated and performed. The female entrepreneurs typically situate themselves as protectors of culture, spiritual brokers, or mothers of the community, identities that grant them symbolic power. P03, the Ssenga, disclosed that:

> *People don't just pay me for advice. They come for identity, for something they feel is disappearing.*

Here, the entrepreneur is a bridge between past and present, offering clients not only a product or service but a sense of belonging and continuity. This emotional and symbolic capital is particularly valuable in a context where urbanization, migration and digital change are transforming social structures.

Also impacting business decisions such as prices, client choice, and time of initiation was spirituality. Some of the women reported denying potential clients they considered "spiritually incompatible." Some set their pricing from morality/divination rather than pricing according to market rates. These are all testimonies to a sense of ethics rather than economics, the recognition that all entrepreneurship is not economically driven. P13, who performs ceremonies, stated that:

> *Certain things cannot be paid for. You accept what is offered to you from the heart. That is the way to receive blessings.*

Although such activities look economically inefficient, they tend to build up long-term trust, word of mouth, and social protection that are important to sustainability in informal economy.

In terms of RBV, all the practices refer to culturally embedded entrepreneurship in that resources are not merely assets but become symbolic and relational. This adds to conventional resource frameworks by recognizing spirituality and identity as strategic resources, challenging Western entrepreneurship models that prioritize economic rationality over other value systems. The integration of RBV and SCT here reveals how such resources gain economic value through social recognition and relational embeddedness.

Spirituality, resilience, and identity work as intangible infrastructure for women's cultural entrepreneurship. They facilitate survival through social attachment, and reputational strength. These elements, though rarely captured in economic indicators, are central to how these businesses function, grow and endure. Recognizing them as resources in their own right expands our understanding of entrepreneurship beyond material or institutional frameworks and affirms the depth of women's cultural work in sustaining both enterprise and heritage.

6.8 Synthesis and Reflective Comments on the Research Question

This synthesis integrates findings across all six themes to provide a comprehensive answer to our central research question: "How do women cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda identify, mobilize, and utilize resources to sustain their entrepreneurial practices?"

By systematically applying the integrated RBV-SCT framework, we develop a culturally embedded model of resource mobilization that extends existing entrepreneurship theory while addressing identified research gaps.

Using grounded thematic analysis of fifteen in-depth interviews and under the theoretical framework of the Resource-Based View (RBV) and enriched by the social capital theory, six interrelated themes emerged that reveal the resource strategy utilized by the women under consideration. Though each theme was focused upon a specific aspect of resource involvement, they collectively provide a detailed, holistic image of cultural entrepreneurship as practice that is socially embedded, spiritually rooted, and bounded by relational relationships.

Major Insights Obtained through Each Theme

Cultural knowledge as an intangible resource:

Women draw upon transmitted practices, rituals, and oral knowledge as resources for their businesses. These resources are rooted in identity and community and possess RBV characteristics of rarity, inimitability, and value. Because they cannot be easily transferred or imitated, they give to the entrepreneurs a potent yet context-dependent competitive advantage.

Resource constraints and tactical innovation:

Confronted with restricted access to institutional funds, infrastructure, or institutional support, the participants demonstrated extraordinary dynamic capabilities by devising tools, adapting materials, and repurposing space. Their strategic reactions to constraints of resources reveal a particular type of contextual innovation based on need, resilience, and profound cultural knowledge.

Social and kinship networks as pools of resources:

Networks of family, peer groups, savings groups, and leaders of the wider society are important stores of financial, emotional, and informational resources. Access to clients, resources, moral support, and legitimacy is obtained through these networks. Entrepreneurial access to social capital is simultaneously a valuable resource and strategic capability.

Authenticity vs. commodification

An ongoing issue exists between the preservation of the religious and communal value of culture practices and the pressure of adapting them for wider markets. Women balance the situation by carefully modifying elements like presentation, language or style while maintaining fundamental values. Authenticity is revealed to be a sensitive yet priceless asset that requires constant negotiating.

Gendered roles, authority, and leadership in cultural activity:

Gender roles determine access to knowledge, legitimacy, and leadership. But women use agency in the guise of inherited roles (e.g., Ssenga), implicit resistance, and symbolic authority. Their exploitation of gendered power is thus an entrepreneurial approach, where legitimacy and trust are crucial intangible resources.

Spirituality, Resilience, and Identity as Business

For most participants, entrepreneurship is not only economic but a calling that is wrapped up with spiritual obligations, community restoration, and identity. Resilience is framed through survival narratives and identity is derived as a source of significance, trust and market differentiation.

Cross-Cutting Patterns and Theoretical Contributions

Some overriding patterns become apparent when analysing these themes:

Embeddedness:

Resource identification and mobilization are institutionally embedded within the social, spiritual and cultural existence of the entrepreneur's community. They never occur in isolation, but rather through intricate networks of sense, obligations, and belonging.

Interplay of constraints and capacity:

Constraints whether they are financial, gender, or infrastructure-related, act not only as barriers, but also as catalysts of creativity, builders of relationships, and promoters of adaptability. Women's strategic reactions to constraints reveal aspects of entrepreneurial potential often overlooked by mainstream models.

Fragility of resources

Many resources such as trust of the community, knowledge of the ancestors, or authenticity can't be scaled and are quickly destroyed if not preserved carefully. The women are constantly forced to weigh growth against preservation, something that takes not only business acumen but cultural and ethical judgment.

Reflection upon the Research Question

Our findings contribute to ongoing debates in women's entrepreneurship literature on the relationship between agency and structure (Kabeer, 1999; Ahl & Marlow, 2012), showing how women exercise strategic agency within structural constraints. They also add to cultural entrepreneurship studies (Khaire, 2017; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019) by showing how authenticity is negotiated in Global South contexts

When answering our research question, we find that resource mobilization for the women cultural entrepreneurs of Central Uganda is:

- **Relational:** It happens through networks, kinships, mentors, and consumers, as opposed to institutionalized organizations.
- **Contextual:** It is influenced by cultural interpretations, social obligations, and local restrictions.
- **Dynamic:** It consists of adapting, improvising, and transforming over time.
- **Identity-Based:** Their self-conceptions of being healers, culture protectors, mothers, or mentors directly dictate their business models and practices.

They challenge narrow conceptualizations of entrepreneurship based upon formalization, scale, or innovation as disruption. Instead, they support the importance of culturally derived entrepreneurship as a form of community-oriented, resilience-based economic activity which is most important in those settings that have limited institutional support.

Visual summary: Linking themes to Resource-Based View Dimension

To show the interrelationships of the six themes and fundamental aspects of the Resource-Based View, the below table is presented:

Table 6.7: Synthesizing Themes with RBV Dimensions

Theme	Key Resource Type	RBV Dimension	Strategic Function
Cultural Knowledge	Rituals, stories, ancestral craft	Valuable, Rare, Inimitable	Differentiation and legitimacy
Tactical Innovation	Improvised tools, skills	Organizational capability	Survival and adaptability
Social and Kinship Networks	Trust, reciprocity, referrals	Relational assets, path-dependent	Access to markets and protection
Authenticity–Commodification Dilemma	Cultural authority, symbolism	Non-substitutable, fragile	Strategic positioning and client loyalty
Gendered Roles and Leadership	Legitimacy, mentorship, voice	Intangible human resource	Authority and trust-building
Spirituality, Resilience, and Identity	Calling, emotional strength	Inimitable, path-dependent	Mission alignment and narrative value

This integrated analysis demonstrates the value of combining RBV and SCT to understand resource mobilization in culturally embedded contexts. While RBV helps identify what resources are valuable and why they provide competitive advantage, SCT explains how these resources are accessed, validated and sustained through social networks. Together, they uncover the dynamic interplay between internal capabilities and external relational structures that characterizes successful cultural entrepreneurship in resource-constrained environments.

7. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of Key Findings

This chapter synthesizes our empirical findings through the integrated lenses of Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory. We discuss how our findings contribute to existing literature on women's entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurship and resource mobilization in the Global South, while identifying insights that contribute to the current theoretical understanding.

This research aimed to examine how female cultural entrepreneurs from Central Ugandan use both tangible and intangible resources in order to maintain business operations and cultural authenticity at the same time. Based on fifteen in-depth interviews, results describe six related themes, which show the multifaceted challenges encountered by these women and creative strategies utilized.

First, it was established that cultural knowledge and traditional practices are valuable resources. Many participants learned skills and knowledge from their communities or families, including skills in herbal medicine, craft traditions, performing arts and birth ritual. This cultural capital not only provided an avenue to earn an income but also to assert one's identity and maintain one's lineages, indicating entrepreneurship here as inherent to tradition and sense of one's belongings.

Secondly, social and kin relations are used as necessary support systems. Relatives, neighbours, acquaintances and community institutions provided financial support, labour, credibility, and emotional support. These social relations functioned as informal protection systems which enabled the women to establish or grow their businesses regardless of the absence of formal institutional support.

Thirdly, the participants demonstrated characteristic strategic awareness and industriousness in spite of resource limitations. Many adapted to resource limitations through improvisation, such as by utilizing second-hand tools, trading through barter for essential materials or learning skills through practical learning. Their ability to make do under circumstances highlights an entrepreneurial creativity often overlooked in formal theoretical models.

The women also navigate through dilemmas posed by the need to balance cultural authenticity and current marketplace needs simultaneously. Some modify products or services in attempts to access tourists or younger demographics, whereas others staunchly resist changes due to the sacred or communal nature of their work. These choices are highly personal and frequently based upon spiritual or moral criteria.

Fifth, social norms regulating gender expressed themselves substantially in the actions and understandings of these women. Many experience scepticism, resistance or alienation in male-dominated settings but often find empowerment in matriarchal circles. Their work cuts across boundaries between domestic duty, religious duty, and economic enterprise and as a result, it creates unique types of agency.

Finally, spirituality and identity are strong motivations. Many of these women expressed feeling "called" to their businesses by ancestral spirits and representing their businesses as expressions of their life mission or healing gifts. These spiritual motives bestow their businesses with an importance which exceeds economic reward and is often moral and social duty.

Together, these themes demonstrate cultural entrepreneurship in Central Uganda as more than just economic enterprise. It represents ideas of legacy, resilience, sense of belonging and transformation. The female respondents in this study demonstrated that, even in contexts of poor formal infrastructure, great and durable businesses can be built through local knowledge utilization, social trust creation and creating a connection to cultural heritage.

7.2 Theoretical Contributions

Our findings reveal several surprising insights that challenge existing literature. First, contrary to studies that frame resource scarcity as purely limiting (Aterido, Beck & Iacovone, 2013), we found that constraints actively stimulate culturally embedded innovation. Second, while existing research often portrays social networks as unambiguously positive (Putnam, 2000), we found that they impose significant obligations, particularly for women. Third, we extend authenticity literature (Beverland, 2005; Khaire, 2017) by showing how it is actively performed and negotiated rather than merely inherited.

Extending the Resource-Based View (RBV)

Resource-Based View (RBV) traditionally highlights the internal resources of a business, as being responsible for achieving competitive advantage (Barney, 1991, 2000). These attributes include being valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. While this theory has been widely used in business and formal corporate contexts, this research extends its practice to informal, resource constrained and culturally embedded entrepreneurial contexts.

These women use intangible and culture-grounded resources such as ancestral knowledge, spiritual authority, personal reputation and intergenerational teaching as their key sources of advantage. Not only are these resources hard to duplicate, but also they are grounded in extensive cultural relations and local knowledges and therefore

highly context specific. It can therefore be shown in this example that RBV has vast applicability in informal economies.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that capabilities, as emphasized in later developments of RBV (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997), include not just strategic planning or investment but also adaptive improvisation, bricolage, and spiritually informed decision-making. These forms of resourcefulness allowed entrepreneurs to navigate volatile environments without traditional forms of capital, offering a more grounded and inclusive reading of what "capability" entails in entrepreneurship.

Reinforcing and Localizing Social Capital Theory

This research also contributes to Social Capital Theory by showing how strong connections in closely interlinked communities supports business activities.

Trust-based relationships within kinship groups, women's associations and village networks are often more impactful to the women than formal business contacts or institutional actors. These social networks are not only as a source of financial capital but also function as emotional and moral support systems.

Bridging Informal, Gendered, and Cultural Entrepreneurship

Finally, this study contributes to the growing literature attempting to decolonize and diversify theoretical perspectives on entrepreneurship. Highlighting rural Ugandan women's experience, the research challenges dominant Western paradigms that overwhelmingly define entrepreneurship in terms of formalization, expansion and profit maximization. Instead, entrepreneurship in this case study emerges as a cultural practice, resistance act, spiritual calling and a relational activity.

7.3 Practical Contributions

These findings have various practical implications for governments, community policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and cultural institutions interested in promoting grassroots entrepreneurship, particularly among women operating in informal and culturally embedded contexts.

1. Acknowledging informal cultural businesses as legitimate economic actors

These female entrepreneurs operate outside of multiple formal arrangements related to business registration, taxation, or regulation compliance. Their work, however, contributes substantially to local economies, social cohesion, and cultural retention. One important practical implication is the need for inclusive policy structures to take account of informal cultural businesses as legitimate and worthy of support.

Government and non-government programs must also refrain from imposing rigid formalization frameworks and rather, provide culturally adaptable systems aligned to those entrepreneurs' own perspectives. For example, simplifying registration processes or offering informal training spaces that do not require fluent literacy or English proficiency could improve accessibility.

2. Building on existing social and kinship networks

Many of the women interviewed emphasized how their social capital, which is clan, family, women's organizations, is central to their survival and success. These networks provide informal credit, shared labour, information flows and emotional support.

Instead of bypassing or substituting these systems, support programs would work better by operating through them. Providing training or initial capital to formalized women's collectives, for example, may prove better than reaching out to individual initiatives.

3. Improving access to resources without undermining autonomy

A recurring theme was resource scarcity, particularly access to capital, and tools. However, some women expressed hesitation to loans tied to formal financial systems, fearing high interest rates or loss of control. As such, interventions should focus on low-risk, flexible financing mechanisms like village savings groups, micro-grants or tool-lending libraries. These models respect existing autonomy while still addressing pressing resource needs.

4. Recognizing and valuing cultural labour

Finally, this study calls for a broader societal and policy recognition of the value of cultural labour, especially by women. Traditional medicine, birth support, ceremonial clothing, and funeral rites are not only services they are acts of care and cultural transmission. Policymakers and community leaders should advocate for these

contributions to be included in local development planning and cultural heritage preservation strategies.

7.4 Limitations of the Study

Although this study contributes valuable knowledge of day-to-day experience of cultural entrepreneurs in Central Uganda, it is important to recognize that it has its limitations. These limitations do not diminish the value of research. Instead, they define limits in which findings of the research have to be interpreted.

1. Sample Size and Scope

The research was carried out through in-depth interviews of 15 women. While this technique helped in ample interaction and thematic richness, the sample size is relatively small and localized in Central Uganda. As such this prevents the generalization of results to cover all cultural entrepreneurs in Uganda or, indeed, beyond Uganda. There could be differences in cultural practice, social structure, and resource dynamics across different regions.

Furthermore, the participants were sampled through purposive and snowball sampling, and while this enabled information-rich cases to be identified, it likely generated biases in favour of entrepreneurs who were more obvious or better networked. The voices of more reclusive or excluded women might have been underrepresented inadvertently.

2. Ethical and Privacy Restrictions

Due to ethical considerations and participant privacy, audio recording during most interviews was not undertaken, and participants were issued codes to remain anonymous (e.g., P1, P2...). By basing it on extensive note-taking and reflective summary, certain details involving tone, sentiment, or phrasing inevitably could have been lost. Nevertheless, our aim was to keep participants' voices as authentic as possible by facilitating immediate cross-checks of notes following each session and through triangulating data at the research team level.

3. Researcher Positionality

In our roles as research academics, the fact that some of us being non-local and situated in the framework of a European university inevitably shaped how we carried out the study and how we made sense of data. In spite of our attempts to build rapport and have accommodative dialogue, we acknowledge our understandings to be contextual and partial.

Specifically, the cultural tones, symbolic meanings and other personal expressions from the interviews might have had meanings that we, as outsiders or semi-outsiders, could not appreciate as fully as we would have liked.

4. Theoretical Boundaries

This research primarily uses both Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Capital Theory as conceptual lenses. Although these conceptual frameworks proved helpful in structuring as well as in interpreting the data, both have their weaknesses. Specifically, RBV may poorly capture the spiritual and other aspects entailed in cultural entrepreneurship, and Social Capital Theory can potentially idealize community networks without acknowledging power dynamics or exclusions.

We also recognize other theoretical frameworks including indigenous knowledge systems, and postcolonial theory, might have offered further perspectives which have not been addressed in this research work.

7.5 Directions for Future Research

This research's findings offer several future trajectories of research on cultural entrepreneurship, gender dynamics, and resource mobilization in East Africa and elsewhere. These can deepen theoretical insight, improve policy relevance, and promote inclusive knowledge production.

1. Broadening geographic and demographic reach

This future work might extend beyond Central Uganda to chart how cultural entrepreneurs in Northern, Eastern, or Western Uganda balance authenticity and cultural entrepreneurship. Different ethnic groups and regional economies can influence resource mobilization and perceptions of authenticity.

In addition, there could be an inclusion of male cultural entrepreneurs, youth, and people with disabilities to have a better understanding of cultural entrepreneurship and how gender, age, and ability intersect in cultural practice and economic participation.

2. Ethnographic and Longitudinal Studies

This research provided a short summary, but longitudinal research would provide interesting information regarding the trajectory of cultural businesses over time whether they grow, disintegrate, adapt, or transform in response to changing social and economic demands. This would be particularly helpful in terms of understanding how authenticity is sustained or reinterpreted over long periods of time.

In addition, using ethnographic or participatory research methods such as field observation, observation of cultural rites or cooperative research involving participants has the possibility of revealing rich layers of knowledge, which can be evasive during purely interview-based research. These would be particularly fitting methods to study entrepreneurship's symbolic and spiritual dimensions, as emphasized by many participants.

3. Comparative and Cross-Cultural Studies

Comparative research might examine expressions of cultural entrepreneurship in various African nations or cultural contexts and in this way, contribute to insights into shared struggles or innovative strategies. For instance, research comparing Ugandan women's practices to those in Kenya, Tanzania, or Ghana might reveal trends or patterns in tradition and contemporary culture.

Similarly, cross-national research between diaspora and domestic business owners might identify how cultural identity and resource mobilization vary across borders. This might be particularly productive in understanding how authenticity is retained or reformed in transnational cultural enterprises.

4. Technological innovations and online platforms

Because most of the interviewees rely on face-to-face communication and local reputation, future studies would examine how digital tools such as mobile money, social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, or e-commerce sites restructure cultural entrepreneurship.

5. Alternative theoretical perspectives

In conclusion, subsequent research could apply different or supplementary theoretical frameworks in an effort to study cultural entrepreneurship outside the current boundaries.

7.6 Final Reflection

This research project has been intellectually challenging and individually transformational for us as a research team. As a student research group, we embarked on this project with a set of questions related to entrepreneurship, sustainability, and cultural identity. However, our field experiences were more than academic. The women we interviewed were not just business owners, they also protect legacies, demonstrated resilience and connected the community in their daily practice.

Engaging with these entrepreneurs reminded us that entrepreneurship is not a one-size-fits-all model. Their work challenged much of our own understanding particularly that which is informed by Western models on it means to be an entrepreneur, what resources look like and what success should be measured by.

What this project reveals is that entrepreneurship in cultural contexts is not only a matter of starting a business, but a negotiated act of belonging, one that must be culturally earned before it can be economically sustained. By understanding entrepreneurship as the stewardship of heritage, rather than only its commercialization, this thesis invites future research to take cultural legitimacy as seriously as capital.

As we conclude this thesis, we are left not with closure but with a renewed curiosity. We hope that this work not only contributes to academic conversations but also sparks further dialogue about how cultural knowledge, gendered work and entrepreneurship intersect. Most importantly, we hope it honours the wisdom, creativity and strength of the women who opened their lives to us. This thesis, then, is not just ours. It belongs rightfully to the voices that shaped it.

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Apendix

Apendix A

Interview Questions

Section 1: General Information

- What is your name?
- Which products do you deal with in your business?
- How long have you been involved in cultural entrepreneurship?

Section 2: Background and Entrepreneurial Journey

- How did you get interested in cultural entrepreneurship?
- What cultural products or services do you offer, and how do they reflect your culture?
- How has your business been going since you started?

- If good, what major milestones have you achieved?

Section 3: Resource Identification and Utilization

- What are the key resources that you deal with for your business?
- What tangible resources (e.g., raw materials, tools) do you use for your business?
- What intangible resources (e.g., cultural knowledge, practices, community networks) do you use in your business?
- How do you access tangible and intangible resources for your business?
- How do these resources add value to your culture?
- In what ways does your cultural entrepreneurship business contribute to your community?

Section 4: Challenges and Opportunities

- What challenges do you face in your business?
- Do you have access to financial support (grants, loans, or funding)? If yes, what kind of support?
- Have you ever received any training or mentorship support from the government or other organizations? If yes, what kind?
- Do you have access to market opportunities through organizations or networks? If yes, what kind?
- What help has been most beneficial to sustain your cultural entrepreneurship? (e.g., Training/mentorship, Funding, Marketing opportunities)
- How do you balance cultural authenticity with profit-making?

Section 5: Recommendations and Future Perspectives

- What strategies would you recommend for improving access to resources for cultural entrepreneurs?
- What should the government and organizations do to support cultural entrepreneurship in your community?
- Do you have any additional insights or suggestions on how cultural entrepreneurship can drive sustainable community development?