The male dominated franchising environment fails to attract women

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Lorelle Frazer**
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Abstract

Australia is often regarded as a leader of franchising practice because it has over three times the number of franchise systems per capita than the United States. However, female participation in franchising is much lower than in traditional small business. Based on a comprehensive review of the literature, this paper develops a series of theoretical propositions in an attempt to explain why women are not attracted to the franchising business model. Using a three-stage data collection process, the first stage of data collection and analysis is reported in this paper. A survey of Australian franchisors provides descriptive data about the profile of franchisees. The findings confirm that female participation rates in franchising are low, despite a crucial shortage of franchisees. This paper provides a framework for further research surrounding women in franchising.

Field of Research: Management (Entrepreneurship)

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1. Introduction

Franchising performs an important role in the production and distribution of goods and services in many world economies. The Australian franchising sector currently contributes $128 billion to the local economy, with approximately 960 business format franchise systems and 62,000 units servicing its population of 20 million people (Frazer et al., 2006). Although the growth in Australia is at an earlier stage of development than some other nations, it is expected that it will closely follow the United States’ experience as an increasingly dominant form of goods and services exchange in the future (McCosker, 1994, Frazer, 2000). However, recent research suggests women are under-represented in the sector and that a lack of suitable franchisee candidates is a major impediment to growth (Weaven and Frazer, 2005).

Female-owned businesses are becoming increasingly important to employment in many economies (Riebe, 2005, Moore, 2002). Currently, more than 33 percent of small businesses in Australia are owned and operated by women, with the growth in female-owned small businesses exceeding the rates of growth in male owned enterprises (ABS, 2004). However, while research suggests that 18.5 percent of franchise units in the United States are owned by women (The State of Small Business, 1990), we do not currently know if similar rates of adoption are present within the Australian franchising sector. Given the importance attached to encouraging female self-employment in Australia (Bennett and Dann, 2000) and the growth implications associated with difficulties in finding suitable franchisee candidates (Frazer et al., 2006), it is also critical for the franchising sector that we attempt to understand current participation rates and the causes and disincentives driving franchising choice from the female franchisee’s perspective. This research seeks to investigate the motivational incentives and disincentives influencing franchising choice from the female franchisee’s perspective and presents results from a national survey of franchise systems in Australia.

2. Background

Early research examining organisational choice behaviours identifies female entrepreneurs as typically risk averse individuals operating micro businesses mostly within traditional retail and services sectors (Still and Timms, 1999, Sheridan and Conway, 2003). Generally, social motives are more important than desired extrinsic rewards, leading some researchers to suggest that female small business owners are ‘satisfiers’ who limit growth in their enterprises in an attempt to maintain control over the future (social) direction of their enterprises (Still et al., 1990, Brush and Hisrich, 1991). However, the growth of female-owned enterprises may be limited by external constraints as many women face significant difficulty in obtaining equity investment, appropriate training and ongoing managerial advice (Still and Guerin, 1991, Boden and Nucci, 2000). As franchising offers an efficient method of business expansion through reducing capital and experiential barriers to entry (Oxenfeldt and Kelly, 1968-1969, Kirby and Watson, 1999, Combs and Castrogiovanni, 1994), it is curious that greater numbers of female franchisees are not evident within the Australian franchising sector.

More recent research suggests that female entrepreneurs enter independent business operations to realize goals of wealth creation and rapid business growth (Still and Soutar, 2001, Carter and Anderson, 2001). These entrepreneurs are more likely ‘pulled’ into self-employment with the view to grow and replicate their business concepts (Korn/Ferry, 2001). Franchising may appeal to this group as it offers an efficient method of expanding the size
and reach of the business with minimum capital outlay so as to accelerate network growth, market penetration and brand building (Justis and Judd, 2004). However, the participation rates of women in franchising are lower than in independent small business operations (Frazer and Weaven, 2004) and currently, the number of female franchisors in Australia is unknown, but thought to be very small. Furthermore, the academic literature examining the motivational incentives for women to become franchisors is limited (Dant et al., 1996). In addition, due to the unique characteristics of franchise networks, any discussion that postulates symmetry of motives between individuals entering franchise networks as opposed to other forms of self-employment may be unrealistic and untenable (Kaufmann, 1999).

Although there is a lack of consensus in the literature regarding the location of entrepreneurial activity in franchise networks (Rubin, 1978, Knight, 1984, Grunhagen and Mittelstaedt, 2005, Bradach and Eccles, 1989, Anderson et al., 1992), there is some agreement that franchisees share similarities with independent business owners in terms of their risk postures, achievement motivation, creativity and entrepreneurial orientation (Morrison, 2000, Kaufmann and Dant, 1998). Therefore, this research focuses upon the reasons influencing women to become franchisees. Consistent with previous gender-based research, this research evaluates differences between female entrepreneurs separately from male entrepreneurs (Shelton, 2006, Mirchandani, 1999). This is because the gender processes, motivators and factors that influence women’s business model choice are not fully explained by current typologies drawn from male-based research (Morris et al., 2006). The current research supplements the small business literature by examining the motivational incentives influencing female entrepreneurs to become franchisees.

Given that little is known about this topic, an exploratory approach was adopted in order to identify the motivational incentives influencing franchising choice and to develop theory. Following a review of the entrepreneurship, business networks and franchising literatures, a series of theoretical propositions was developed. Next, the first stage of data collection was conducted, providing descriptive information about the profile of franchisees in Australia. Finally, implications for further research are considered.

3. Literature review

Three main areas of the literature were reviewed. Firstly, the entrepreneurship literature was examined in relation to the reasons why individuals enter small business arrangements. Secondly, the small business literature was examined in relation to the motivations for women to create new enterprises. Thirdly, motivational incentives governing franchising choice from the franchisee’s perspective is discussed.

Motivations for small business ownership. The examination of the reasons influencing individuals to enter small business ownership is amongst the most extensively researched area in the field of small business management (Walker, 2004a). Most research suggests that individuals are driven by intrinsic needs and financial goals such as the need for control and achievement, operational independence, the minimization of work and family conflict and wealth creation (Kuratko et al., 1997, Hisrich, 1986, Burns, 1996, Birley and Westhead, 1994, Bird, 1989). Most research suggests that intrinsic rather than extrinsic outcomes are of greater importance in an individual’s drive towards self employment (Gray, 1993).

Apart from the impact of personal and financial goals on organisational choice, an individual’s perception of his or her current working situation may influence small business
adoption. Prior work experiences such as a perceived lack of opportunity commensurate with effort, low pay conditions, and the need to break away from supervision may encourage small business start ups (Moore and Buttner, 1997). In addition, unemployment may drive individuals to become self-employed (Still and Guerin, 1991). These ‘reluctant entrepreneurs’ (Stanworth and Stanworth, 1997, p.58) are generally motivated by financial needs and less likely to grow the size of their businesses. While the above studies provide a solid context for motivational analysis and small business ownership, other research suggests that women may have unique motives for starting businesses (Gatewood et al., 1995).

**Motivations for women to enter small business arrangements.** Prior research suggests that male business owners are generally motivated to achieve efficiency, objectivity and transactions, while females appear to place value on subjectivity and growing (and leveraging) social capital (Gilligan, 1982). Previous research suggests that females enter self employment due to ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors (Alstete 2003) or some combination thereof (Still, 2003). Issues including redundancy, unemployment and managing work and family commitments may force female entrepreneurs to enter independent self-employment (Buttner & Moore 1997; Catley & Hamilton 1998; Fielden et al. 2003). Furthermore, women may start their own businesses due to the lack of promotional advancement opportunities (often termed ‘glass ceiling’ effects) or not having access to appropriate mentors (Korn/Ferry, 2001). Generally, the majority of research suggests that female copreneurial roles are defined along traditional care giving roles at home (Baines and Wheelock, 1998) and secretarial/bookkeeping functions at work (Fitzgerald and Muske, 2002). However, recent research suggests that gender roles within copreneurial relationships are changing with women entering self employment to realize both personal and financial goals (De-Bruin and Lewis, 2004).

Other reasons why women may enter small business include gaining greater independence and autonomy (Daily et al. 1999), and building cooperative business networks (Rosa & Hamilton 1994) which are often cited as core benefits of franchising (Stanworth and Curran, 1999). Although the need for independence is often quoted as the most important motivator of women starting businesses (Cromie, 1987), there is some evidence that economic motives are important, particularly with reference to wealth creation, financial security, status building and power (Orhan and Scott, 2001). However, most research has found that women enter small business arrangements to satisfy intrinsic motivations centring upon building favourable client networks and contributing to the local community (Still and Timms, 2000).

Previous research has examined the role of an individual’s background, education and experience upon a female’s choice of business model. Early findings suggest that female entrepreneurs are less likely to pursue higher education in traditional male-image sectors such as technology and manufacturing, and are more likely to favour entering traditional ‘female image’ businesses mostly within service industries (Hoffman and Preble, 1993). However, recent studies suggest that individual motivations may be moderated by age, with younger women entering self employment in a range of traditional and non-traditional industries so as to grow a business opportunity and utilise business knowledge gained from previous experiences (Centre for Women’s Business Research 2001). However, we currently do not know whether age moderates a female’s choice of business model.

**Motivations to become franchisees.** Franchising may be viewed as a small business alternative to fully independent business ownership, within the broader context of the individual’s drive toward self-employment (Kaufmann, 1999). Presumably, franchising is successful as it affords satisfactory levels of independence, together with training and support.
that reduces risk comparative to entering an autonomous enterprise (Kaufmann and Dant, 1998). Franchising has been touted as an easier method for women and minorities to enter self employment (Hunt, 1977). However, women do not appear to have fully exploited this growth strategy (Dant et al., 1996). This outcome is curious given the economic advantages associated with this form of distribution. Franchising may offer a comparatively easier method of small business ownership (Leach, 1994) as it minimises capital, experiential and labour constraints on business growth (Michael, 1996). Greater attention to the motives, drivers and constraints influencing female participation as franchisees is needed. In support of this, researchers suggest that 'on a wider public policy level, the issues of motives need to be addressed’ (Dant et al., 1996 , p.26). In the following section we develop a set of theoretical propositions surrounding the choice of women to enter franchising.

4. Proposition development

**Push/ Pull constraints.** The literature on self-employment posits that small business ownership is often a decision which is based on either ‘pull’ or ‘push’ factors (Sti1l, 2003). Individuals may be ‘pulled’ into small business because they are intrinsically motivated and have a desire to take control of their working lives (Walker, 2000). However, most research claims that women are more likely to be pushed into small business by factors such as redundancy, the glass ceiling, unemployment or difficulties in balancing work and family commitments (Moore and Buttner, 1997). However, there does not appear to be consensus on this issue with recent research suggesting that pull factors figure prominently in women’s self-employment decisions (Sti1l, 2003).

However, why is it that women choose not to utilise franchising as a vehicle for small business ownership? Perhaps franchising may provide limited independence and opportunity to be creative by franchisees (Felstead, 1991b), thus minimising the appeal of this business arrangement to female entrepreneurs motivated by ‘pull’ factors. Alternatively, those motivated by push factors may regard franchising as an easier method of entering self-employment as it reduces the need for experiential and capital barriers to entry (Combs and Castrogiovanni, 1994). Currently, it is unknown whether push and pull factors play a role in a women’s choice regarding franchising business models, and while understanding the motives of female franchisees has important implications for the way franchisors focus their marketing efforts, no research has addressed this issue. Therefore we raise the following propositions:

**Proposition 1a:** Push and pull factors will influence a woman’s choice of a becoming a franchisee.

**Proposition 1b:** a) Where a motivation for self-employment is dominated by pull factors we expect to find a negative relationship with likelihood to enter into franchising and b) when a woman’s entrepreneurial motivation is dominated by push factors we expect to find a positive relationship with the decision to enter franchising.

**Start-up costs.** Evidence suggests that franchisors are almost exclusively men (Dant et al., 1996). Given this situation it is possible that the attitudes held by these men about the ability of women as successful franchisees may hinder a woman’s opportunity to move into a franchise arrangement. It is also well documented that women are generally less capable than men of securing finance from traditional financial institutions when attempting to start a small or medium sized enterprise (Bradley, 1999). Further, it seems that women may often start a business with a relatively small amount of capital. Still’s (2002) survey of female business owners in Western Australia shows that 78 percent of female small businesses are started with less than $50 000 while 68 percent begin with less than $25 000. Importantly the average total

[www.franchise.edu.au](http://www.franchise.edu.au)
start-up fee for an Australian franchise is $120,000 (Frazer and Weaven, 2004) suggesting that the majority of potential female franchisees will be either priced out of franchising or have to look at alternative entry models at the lower price end of the market (franchise units priced between $15,000 and $50,000). Thus it is proposed that:

**Proposition 2:** Low cost franchises will be more attractive to female investors.

*Female image sectors.* Previous research suggests that female entrepreneurs are drawn to certain business sectors for stereotypical reasons (Cooper, 1981). According to this hypothesis, there is distinctly “female” or “male” imagery associated with certain industries and female franchisors are generally attracted to “downstream industries” (Carter, 1994) that reflect traditional family values and interests such as children’s products, clothing, jewellery, food retailing, and health and beauty aids (Hoffman and Preble, 1993). However, recent research suggests that female franchisees may be moving away from traditional female industry sectors (for example, beauty products) into recreation, business services, and real-estate sectors (Hoffman and Preble, 1993). Furthermore, women appear to be breaking through gender-based occupational and sectoral confines by entering the autonomous liberal professions (Murphy, 1990) such as medicine, law, veterinary science and accountancy. However, apart from the results of a United States study of female franchisors suggesting that women favour female image sectors, there is no data on female participation and industry type (Dant et al., 1996). Hence, it is proposed that:

**Proposition 3:** Women in franchising are more likely to enter into the female image sector than less traditional and non-traditional female sectors.

*Age.* Previous research suggests that women over the age of 35 are motivated to enter independent self employment by intrinsic needs such as independence, creativity and minimising work and family conflict (Levent et al., 2003). In comparison, women under the age of 35 place more importance on economic motives (Walker, 2000). Perhaps older women see franchising as an easier method of entering self employment as it offers some degree of operational autonomy and ongoing support that reduces the risks associated with fully independent employment (Kaufmann, 1999). In addition, franchisors may seek out older women as they are more likely to have previous management experience that can add value to the network (Frazer and Weaven, 2004). Furthermore, older women may have better access to finance which would increase their likelihood of entering franchising. Nonetheless, it is not clear how age may influence female choice of franchising. There is some evidence that Generation X women are more interested in pursuing economic goals (Still, 2003). Consequently, it may be possible that younger women are more likely to choose to work in less traditional and non-traditional female sectors. Based upon the above discussion we intend to test the following propositions:

**Proposition 4a:** Age will be positively related to a woman’s likelihood of entering franchising.

**Proposition 4b:** Older women will be more likely to enter into traditional female image sectors than younger women.

*Perception of franchise sector.* If it is the case that female entrepreneurs are more likely to be attracted to female image sectors in business generally (Still, 2003), it may also be possible that the low levels of female participation in franchising may be partly explained by their
perception of franchising as a male-dominated sector. That is, it is possible that business format franchising is simply a model that has limited appeal to female entrepreneurs. Research which specifically addresses gender-based rationales relating to the franchising sector could potentially provide useful insights as currently the reasons why individuals, and in particular women, join franchise systems have not been fully explored (Stanworth and Curran, 1999). Consequently, we propose to test the following propositions:

**Proposition 5a:** Women’s perception of franchising as a male dominated and highly structured environment reduces the likelihood of them entering franchising as franchisees.

**Proposition 5b:** Women’s perception that the franchising business model reduces their ability to be creative as entrepreneurs, reduces the likelihood of them becoming a franchisee.

**Entrepreneurial orientation.** It may be argued that all franchisees are entrepreneurial at some level (Kuratko et al., 1997). However, there is currently some debate in the literature regarding the extent to which franchisees are entrepreneurial (Grunhagen and Mittelstaedt, 2005, Felstead, 1991a). While it is generally agreed that franchisees, like small business operators in general, should have an entrepreneurial motive or orientation (Withane, 1991), research investigating the entrepreneurial nature of franchisees has presented some conflicting results (Anderson et al., 1992, Stanworth, 1995). On the one hand, research suggests that risk-taking, a key factor in entrepreneurial activity (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996), was the most important motive driving franchise adoption (Withane, 1991). However, a study comparing single and multiple unit franchisees by Grunhagen & Mittelstaedt, (2005) suggested that single-unit franchisees were not entrepreneurs and are better described as investors because they operate in a semi-autonomous environment of ‘controlled self-employment’ (Felstead, 1991b, p. 39) where their entrepreneurial capacity is limited by explicit franchisor-imposed contractual provisions promoting system wide standardisation (Bradach, 1997). Currently, no examination of entrepreneurial orientation and female participation in franchising has been conducted. Therefore, in the current study we intend to investigate the following proposition:

**Proposition 6:** Entrepreneurial orientation will be negatively related to a women’s choice to enter franchising.

**Work and family conflict.** The role of work and family demands are recognised as important determinants of an individual entrepreneur’s initial status choice (Kaufmann, 1999). Work and family conflict is defined as the pressure arising from incongruity between and individual’s work related roles and family oriented roles (Birley and Westhead, 1994). Family roles are often not addressed due to the inflexibility of work requirements (Greenhaus and Beutello, 1985). Franchising should offer entrepreneurs the independence to manage competing demands in family and work needs (Peterson and Dant, 1990, Knight, 1986). However, in a recent study of franchisee motivations, Kaufmann (1999) found that higher levels of work and family conflict were negatively associated with the choice of self-employment. That is, individual entrepreneurs did not perceive self employment (franchising) as facilitating the management of business and family related needs. However, the applicability of these findings to this study may be limited, given that gender issues were not considered within the analysis. In particular, most prior gender-based small business studies suggest that women are perceived as traditional care givers who place great emphasis on balancing domestic responsibilities with work commitments (Still and Timms, 1999, Moore, 2002). Hence, it is proposed that:
Proposition 7: Female entrepreneurs with greater work and family conflict in their current employment situation are more likely to enter franchising as franchisees.

5. Methodology and Data Collection

This research will be conducted in three stages. Firstly, descriptive data about the profile of franchisees in Australia is required and is presented in this paper. A second stage of data collection will then occur, involving in-depth interviews with female franchisees and female independent business owners allowing us to refine our research propositions. Finally, a model of female participation in franchising will be developed and tested with data collected from a larger sample of participants. In the current paper, the descriptive stage of the research is reported.

A survey was administered electronically (via the internet) in 2006 to the known population of Australian business format franchisors. A comprehensive database of franchisors was compiled from a number of sources. Several existing databases on the internet, including that of the Franchise Council of Australia, were scrutinised, as well as published franchising directories. In addition, trade journals such as Franchising Magazine and capital city newspapers were scanned for information relating to franchise organisations. This resulted in the compilation of a database of 910 organisations involved in franchising.

It was necessary to employ an extensive series of follow ups and reminders to encourage people to respond. Potential respondents were contacted by telephone and email to encourage participation. The questionnaire was pilot tested in two stages with a sample of consultants, academics and franchisors. A response rate of 25.2 percent was achieved which is acceptable in business research (Malhotra et al., 2004). Nevertheless, we tested for nonresponse bias in two ways. Firstly, a comparison of early with late respondents was conducted on all variables. Late respondents are assumed to be similar to nonrespondents because they respond less readily and only after prompting (Oppenheim, 1992). The results of this test indicated that there were no significant differences between the two groups. Secondly, a sample of 50 nonrespondents was compared with the 217 respondents on 8 key variables. Information for nonrespondents was obtained from the Franchising 2006 Yearbook and Directory. This test also indicated that nonresponse bias was not a problem. Another form of non-sampling error may occur due to incorrect responses being provided by respondents. To minimise this possibility, the data were checked carefully for out-of-range values, and where possible, respondents were contacted to verify irregular responses.

6. Results

The survey collected demographic data about franchising in Australia. The profile of franchise organisations is shown in table 1 below, which compares the population of franchisors with the sample of respondents. Retailing dominates franchising activity at both franchisor and franchisee level, with service sector industries involved in property/business and personal services also heavily involved.

Table 1
Industry classification
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response (Industry)</th>
<th>Population of franchisors</th>
<th>Respondent franchisors</th>
<th>Total number of respondents’ units per industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number of responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade non-food (includes automotive services)</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property and business services</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade food (includes fast food)</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and other services (includes video hire and gardening services)</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and insurance</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction and trade services</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation, cafes and restaurants</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and recreation services</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesaling</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications services (includes postal, courier &amp; telecommunications)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing and printing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and storage</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and community services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>910</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>217</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
1) Some 211 out of 217 respondents were able to be classified.
2) Franchisors were coded according to industry type using the major categories provided under the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) coding system.

At the franchisee level, franchising is dominated by men, indicating that while there are opportunities available for women in franchising the incidence of male ownership is significant. Almost 32 percent of all franchised units have male sole owners with female sole owners accounting for only 11 percent of operations. When combined with joint ownership involving spouses, the gender difference is even more pronounced, with male ownership/involvement being over two thirds (69 percent) of all franchises and female involvement in less than a quarter (20 percent). The proportion of women remains lower in franchising than small business ownership in general (ABS, 2004). Table 2 displays franchisee gender characteristics.
Table 2
Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response (Franchisees)</th>
<th>Percentage of franchisees</th>
<th>Percentage by gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ownership with spouse/partner predominantly operated by</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male sole owner</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership with spouse/partner predominantly operated by</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female sole owner</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ownership arrangement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1) A total of 216 franchisors provided a response from an expected 217.

Franchisees are concentrated within the 31 to 50 year age group with approximately 70 percent of franchisees fitting into this profile. This proportion is lower than small business operators in general who comprise 59 percent of this age group (ABS, 2004). While the trend continues for franchisors to favour prior industry and management experience in potential franchisees there is also a need to source prospects with adequate finance. Only 8 percent of males and 14 percent of female franchisees were under 30 years of age (which may be related to lack of access to finance). Similar patterns were found in mature age franchisees with 22 percent of men and 15 percent of women aged over 50 years, as shown in table 3.

Table 3
Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response (Age of franchisees)</th>
<th>Percentage of male franchisees</th>
<th>Percentage of female franchisees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 20 years of age</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 years</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60 years</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 years and over</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1) A total of 212 franchisors provided a response from an expected 217.
7. Discussion and conclusions

The survey data obtained for this research confirms that women are seriously under represented in franchising. More women are opting to operate independently owned businesses than franchised businesses. The major hindrance to franchise system growth was reported by franchisors was the lack of suitable franchisees. Given this stated shortage of franchisees, women are a potential market for franchisee recruitment that deserves to be exploited.

This paper has identified a problem in franchising that is worthy of future exploration. A series of propositions addressing the issue of motivational choice of women to enter franchising was developed from the literature. The next stage of research will seek confirmation of the propositions through in-depth interviews with a sample of female franchisees and independent business owners. A model predicting female propensity to enter franchising will then be developed and tested using a large-scale survey of participants.

This research has potential benefits to both industry and academic settings. It will improve our understanding of an under researched area of women’s motivations to enter franchising, which will add value to the entrepreneurial literature. More importantly, the research has a strong application to industry practice and will attempt to unravel the mystery surrounding the serious under representation of women in franchising.
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