

## **Gender and Entrepreneurship in the Horse-Related Industry**

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*In this paper, we examine the Swedish horse-related industry in terms of entrepreneurship and gender. Based on reports of the industry, a mapping of the entire sector (N= 7504) and a questionnaire (N=520) we find that the industry is portrayed as female gendered, but dominated by men. However, we also find evidence that the industry is changing gender, as women dominate among younger entrepreneurs. The strongest motives for the horse-related entrepreneurs (regardless of gender) are realizing a dream and being able to combine interest with work. We also found that entrepreneurs in this industry mainly network inside the industry.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In Sweden, alongside with many other western countries, there is a strong emphasis on entrepreneurs, and especially female entrepreneurs, as an important tool to get more growing businesses and a more prosperous society (Holmquist, 2008). This growth can be realized in all business sectors, but is perhaps most evident in newer sectors with strong development potential. After having been highly linked to other traditional areas in the past (such as farming and transport) there has been a strong growth in areas where horses are used for leisure activities, including sports (Hall, 2005). For instance, farm-based leisure and recreation are often mentioned as possibilities for farm diversification (Cloke, 1996) and other usages of the horse increase as needs and interests in society alters (Liljestolpe, 2009).

Sweden has the highest number of horses per capita in Europe (Liljestolpe, 2009) and it is estimated that the Swedish horse-related industry has an annual turnover of about 20 billion SEK, and contributes with over four billion SEK in tax revenue to public activities (Johansson & Andersson, 2004). There is a steady increase in number of horses and many new entrepreneurs are found in the horse sector (Lorentzi, 2009; Lindberg, 2010). Still, we lack knowledge about the horse industry, both globally (Elgåker, 2010) and in Sweden, making it more difficult to understand the context of entrepreneurship in the sector.

To understand the mechanisms of becoming an entrepreneur, it is important to understand the representations of entrepreneurs in a certain business segment. In traditional industries, the entrepreneur is a man in his middle ages. Within leisure and experience based industries there is an emergence of “new” or to some extent different businesses (compared to traditional industries), where companies are more free

to find their form of organization, and rely more on for example projects or networks (Lindgren, 2008). To a considerable extent, these new forms are linked to women entrepreneurs. Where entrepreneurship in general earlier was coded masculine and women entrepreneurs had problems fitting, there now seems to be more room for women to be entrepreneurs in their own right. Consequently, these new forms could be important to better allow women to become entrepreneurs, both in general and in each specific context. By studying the specific context of entrepreneurship in the horse-related industry, we aim to find the gendered aspects within the concept of becoming a “horse entrepreneur”. In earlier published texts about entrepreneurship in the horse-related industry (e.g. Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund, 2008; Grundberg & Mohlin, 2008; Sultan, 2009) different pictures about entrepreneurship and gender have emerged. Based on this, it seems to be interesting to study how the horse-related industry is gendered, and more specifically identify which gendered subjects that are found in relation to the horse-related industry.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

We rely on the concept of entrepreneurship as a process that is highly relational and social. Opportunity recognition and enactment are the result of interaction processes that develop in a highly relational (and social) context (Bouwen, 2001; Steyaert and Katz, 2004). Hjort (2005) has shown that the concept entrepreneurship is not static; it changes over time and is depending on form, context and time. To understand entrepreneurship, Hjort (2005) holds that we need to look at the human being as playful and passionate and not only economical. Partly in line with this, Calás et al. (2009) argues about expanding the borders of entrepreneurship theory and research from “Entrepreneurship as a positive economic activity” to “Entrepreneurship as social change”.

### **Gender and Entrepreneurship**

While traditional theories of entrepreneurship often focus on the properties of the entrepreneur and differences between women and men (Ahl, 2004; 2006), gender theories in entrepreneurship instead focus on the processes to become an entrepreneur (Lindgren, 2008) and how entrepreneurship is linked to masculinity making the female entrepreneur described as deficient, inadequate, complementally and odd (Wahl, 1992; Ahl, 2004; 2006). Gender theories have a strong structural component where power and norms are central in creating gender systems often leading to segregation and hierarchization in what men and women do (Hirdman, 1988) and the value of what they do, creating vertical and horizontal segregation in the labor market. Vertical segregation concerns the fact that you normally find more women in some areas, for example care segments and more men in other areas, for instance hi-tech and traditional industries. Horizontal segregation instead is about differences within a given context, where women and men work in different levels, and the pattern is showing that men in general hold higher ranked positions. Based on this, women and men face different opportunities in their work life. Even if men and women are similar in their merits, the gender system makes them different. An important part of this is the different expectations on women and men, which is reproduced by all men and women in society.

Even if gender structures are pervasive, it is actions that reproduce the gender system and these actions can be changed, making the gender system malleable (Butler, 1990). In other words, we do gender and thereby it is possible to change over time. In this research, we are interested in how the subjects, the entrepreneurs within the gender system handle and reformulate the conditions within the frames of gender. To understand the conditions we need to understand how the business is gender labeled.

The understanding about how industries get gender labeled is strongly related to values. A work becomes gender marked based on a system of ideas of what men and women should do to be accepted as normal (Lindgren, 2008). This has to do with values of what a “normal company” is, representations within an industry and how men and women within the industry are portrayed. Both Holmqvist (2008) and Lindgren (2008) argue that the “normal” company in Sweden is a scalable product based firm with an export market. When an industry fulfills these criteria it becomes coded masculine, whereas industries that do not fulfill it – such as service sectors with strong local focus - becomes coded feminine.

The representation of men and women in leading positions in an industry determine to some extent its value (see Kanter, 1977) and its power (Abrahamsson, 2003). Thus, where men are in majority, the value and power is normally greater. The representation tends to be stable, but there are also occurrences of gender shifts in some industries. When an industry is changing gender there are interesting processes going on related to its value. When men get a higher representation in an industry, its perceived value increases and when the representation of men diminishes from an earlier dominating position, the industry tend to lose value (Sundin, 1993). For instance, the care industry that traditionally has been dominated by women has, due to deregulations, recently become more masculinized both in governing logic, leadership and ownership (Sundin & Tillmar, 2010). These changes affect the entire industry and thus also its entrepreneurs.

### **Gendering Labeling in the Swedish Context**

In Sweden, about 78 percent of the entrepreneurs in small companies are men (Nutek, 2003). When we talk about entrepreneurs generally we often mean men, while we use the term female entrepreneur when we about an enterprise run by a woman. Moreover, the kind of entrepreneurship that traditionally is labeled feminine is often undervalued and invisible (Holmqvist, 2008).

Many of the “female” industries exist within trade and services, while men are found in manufacturing and hi-tech industry. While the former is seen as important in certain aspects, it is clear that the latter industries are more highly valued (Lindgren, 2008). To the most part company support structures are geared for “male” companies within manufacturing and high technology (Holmqvist, 2008). The strong focus on technology, commodity production and large scale industries could be one explanation why women start and run fewer companies than men. Another explanation is that part time work is much more common among women, since they still perform most of the household work.

When looking at the green industry, where horse-related businesses normally are found, it is heavily dominated by males - 84 percent of all entrepreneurs are men. However, the official numbers do not give a fair picture, since many women are part owners but not visible in the statistics (Pettersson, 2009). In the statistics from the Swedish green industry association (Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund, 2009), the horse-related companies has the largest proportion of women leaders (42%) and the second smallest share of men as leaders (36 %), leaving 22 percent with a divided leadership.

### **Horse-Related Industries and Its Setting**

The leisure use of horses was only for the privileged in the upper class before 1950, but since then the horse has become accessible to more and more people as a leisure activity. As a result of this, the number of horses has quadrupled over the last fifty years despite that its practical use in the agriculture sector (or other sectors) has virtually ceased to exist (Elgåker, 2010). Sweden have been a special case regarding the development of the riding interest due to that government have decided to support riding schools in order to make riding affordable for all citizens and due to this it is one of the biggest sports among girls today (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2002).

Even if horses are used differently today, horse-related businesses are still seen as a part of the green industry. Despite an on-going structural change towards fewer and larger facilities – and more mechanization - in the green sector most enterprises are small and family-based (Javefors Grauers & Eskilsson, 2003). Research and media pictures of the entrepreneur in the green sector are often associated with a man, even though there are many women present in leading positions, calling for a gender perspective to avoid making women invisible (Pettersson, 2002). Another problem to be entrepreneur in the green industry is that they are often not recognized as entrepreneurs, but instead called farmers, agriculturists, forest owners, or similar attributes. That could explain why companies in green industries seldom are studied as entrepreneurs, and often even excluded in studies about entrepreneurship (Nutek 2005).

Motives are important to understand the shift from traditional farming to increasing horse-related business. The green industry is related to values about a way of living, where the combination of running a business and raising a family is central. According to Bock (2004) the possibility to combine business

and family is the primary motive for women's entrepreneurship in agricultural businesses, especially in the start-ups. In the Netherlands, where Bock did her study, the responsibility to take care of the children is strongly linked to the women. The women she studied increased their self-esteem and experienced both economical and emotional development, and as a consequence, became more autonomous in relation to their partner. Over time, these women-lead companies changed to become more like traditional men-lead firms, with a stronger focus on growth and profit.

Both women and men have to find new ways of earning money and create meaning in countryside living in Sweden today. The emerging horse-related business activities among women and girls in Sweden are often motivated by their passion for their leisure interest. Moreover, the interest from girls to choose educations in agriculture has increased with about 30 per cent over ten years. Most girls are in education programs that focus on horses (Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund, 2009).

There are a number of general issues that make horse-related entrepreneurship more problematic. First, many horse-related companies suffer from not having an industry organization promoting the business on a general level. Those industry organizations that earlier were the natural spokes persons (such as agriculture organizations) are no longer focusing on aspects that is pressing for today's horse-related businesses. For instance, the current tax system makes it difficult to combine a horse-related business with other businesses (Weische, 2007), but this is not a priority task to solve for current industry organizations. Mixing several businesses has been an important way historically for agriculture, hunting, fishing and forestry to earn a living. This is still present today as more than half of the entrepreneurs in agriculture have another employment outside the agriculture sector as their primary source of income (Jordbruksverket, 2008). The conditions for side businesses are also related to gender. Javefors Grauers & Eskilsson (2003) has shown that male coded activities in the sector are less affected. For instance, the male gender-marked activity beekeeping are seen as a main business (even though it can be conducted in a garden), while female-marked business with horses are considered as a complementary business with stricter rules about how it can be combined with other incomes. Several studies demonstrate the importance of understanding the specific conditions women has to design good support to women (Pettersson, 2009). The support must concern the women's situations, their choices and priorities, and it is necessarily to understand the mechanism behind their ambition and the barriers that involves them (Bock, 2004).

The strategy to attain income from several sources could also be a strategy regarding gender. Oldrup (1999) has in a Danish context identified a new type of gender identity of countryside living women. They do not perceive themselves as farm women, but rather they construct their identity from their work outside the farm. At the same time these women create a new identity relating to countryside living. In most cases, these women have a male partner sharing the "countryside living" project which makes the family and the home a project for them both. These women construct collective identities related to ability for action, enterprising and a new modern countryside woman. In their collective identity they challenge unequal relationships in the village they reside in (Arora-Jonsson 2008).

The fundamental values linked to men in the agriculture business has changed from independency, hard work and self-efficacy to individualism, maximum production, efficacy of technique and innovation (Walter, 1997). This has led to a masculinization of doing the milk handling in Sweden and a feminization of doing the work with horses in Sweden (Pettersson, 2009), resulting in increasing status about milking, but a lost status in the work with horses.

To summarize, if we want to understand the evolutionary processes in the horse-related industries and specifically those related to gender and entrepreneurship, we need to focus on how the industry itself is valued, gender representations within the industry and how the ongoing gender processes are developing especially in relation to identity. Next, we will turn to the empirical part of the study outlining the methods we have employed.

## **METHODS**

In this study we use three forms of material for our analysis. First, we collect archive information about all firms in the industry to be able to map it. Second, we use a questionnaire to collect more in-depth information from the most relevant firms in the industry. Third, we use reports of the horse-related sector to get glimpses of how the industry and specifically gender aspects in it is described.

### **Collection of Material**

The first and perhaps most difficult task when we want to map the industry is to define the industry. The horse industry is a gathering of many subsectors that differs in many aspects but traditionally has the countryside and the horse as the common denominator (Hippcom, 2009). Our point of departure is that all firms that acknowledge the horse as a part of their business is part of the industry, while those that do not explicitly mention the horse are not in the industry. Based on this, we have chosen to define the population as all firms that have at least one of the following criteria: 1) Has an industry code related to horses; 2) Has a trade name related to horses; and 3) Mention horses in the bylaws (areas of operation) of the company. Thus, we have chosen a definition where the actors through their formal choices of industry code, trade name and content in bylaws become part of the industry or not. This means that we focus on businesses that directly acknowledge a connection to horse-related activity, while firms that do not explicitly mention the horse (for example subcontractors or general farming) are not included.

Once the matter of defining the industry was settled, it was fairly straight-forward to collect the data. We have used two complementary databases, Affärsdata and Upplysningscentralen (UC), where joint-stock firms were mainly drawn from the first and partnerships (HB/KB) and sole firms (enskilda firmor) were drawn from the latter. Altogether, 7504 companies were found. We have financial information, information on leading actors (chairman, chief executive, partners and board members), and general information about the firm. From the information about leading actors, we could code them as male or female.

For the questionnaire study we used the entire 7504 firms as a starting point. From this we excluded companies that had a turnover of less than 200 kSEK (to assure a minimum activity). For joint-stock firms we had a higher selection point if the horse-related aspect was weaker (i.e. was mentioned as third business segment (500 kSEK) or forth or higher (1000 kSEK)). This was done to minimize including firms that have a too weak relation to the horse. The final sample contained 3055 companies and after three waves 520 usable replies were collected, a response rate of about 20 %. One reason for the relatively low response rate was the length of the questionnaire (167 questions). However, a non-response analysis shows that the responding firms are not different from non-responding firms.

As a third means to collect material for this study we have searched for recent published texts (e.g. reports, pre-studies, folders and handbooks) on the horse-related business in Sweden. A total of 13 publications were found. Many of these are written by the most important organizations in the horse related industry. In Table 1 we provide a brief presentation of these reports.

### **Analysis of Material**

To analyze the material we used gender analysis on a meso level - where structure and actors meet – enabling us to identify structures and power relations but also allowing room for human action.

Based on the mapping of the industry and the questionnaire, we display the picture that these sources show, using ANOVA to test for significant differences. Then we display a number of perspectives from the 13 reports to complement and expand the quantitative material. How men and women are represented and described, in the relation to the description of the industry, as the entrepreneur, and aspects of meaning, are in focus. The interpretation aims to capture the different pictures from the three sources and provide one overall picture where all sources are woven together.

**TABLE 1**  
**THE REPORTS USED FOR OBTAINING GLIMPSES INTO THE INDUSTRY**

<b>NAME OF REPORT</b>	<b>REFERENCE</b>	<b>APPROACH</b>
<b>The challenge of equine entrepreneurship</b>	Bendroth & Falkhaven, 2009	Thirty qualitative interviews are conducted.
<b>Horse business development</b>	Falkhaven, 2009	Uses Webselect data base, internet company documents and other statistics.
<b>Professional horse business leaders</b>	Grundberg & Mohlin, 2008	A selection of horse business entrepreneurs (in total 16, where five is men) are presented by interviews.
<b>The horse in politics</b>	Hästnäringens Nationella Stiftelse, 2006a	Qualitative descriptions of the value of the horse in society based on previous studies.
<b>The horse in Sweden - means more than you think</b>	Hästnäringens Nationella Stiftelse, 2006b	Obtains data from existing research and project reports
<b>The horse in the municipality - means more than you think</b>	Hästnäringens Nationella Stiftelse, 2007	Uses data from existing research and project reports.
<b>Future reconnaissance in the horse industry</b>	Hästnäringens Nationella Stiftelse, 2008	Twelve policy areas are presented and discussed in relation to the horse.
<b>Business Intelligence - From hobby via lifestyle into viable business</b>	Ivarsson, 2007	Several sources where the focus is on values in the horse related business.
<b>The horse as business idea</b>	Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund, 2008	Four men and four women in different areas of the horse-related business are presented.
<b>The profitable horse</b>	Lundmark, 2009	Survey to 1460 entrepreneurs in the horse-related business, followed up with interviews of people in the industry.
<b>Modern horse business - final report</b>	Sultan, 2009	Survey to 40 horse business leaders.
<b>The horse in society</b>	Svala, 2006	An anthology based on the course "The horse, society and planning".
<b>Mechanization of horse stables - inventory and proposals for new solutions</b>	Wallertz & Bendroth, 2009	Twenty-four observations and telephone interviews.

## EMPIRICAL RESULTS

In this part we present the material that later will be discussed. We do that in three subsections linked to the three sources; archive material about the entire industry, questionnaire material from a sample of businesses and the reports about the industry (i.e. those mentioned in Table 1).

### Archival Material

When we searched for all horse-related companies in Sweden we found 7504 firms. Of these 3546 were joint-stock companies, 1069 partnership companies and the remainder 2889 sole firms. Thus, most firms are joint-stock firms, but since many of these firms only have a small portion of their business in the

horse-related industry, there is generally a stronger link to the horse in the sole firms and partnership companies.

In the Swedish business industry code system, only two codes are directly related to the horse industry, namely horse racing and horse breeding. Unsurprisingly, those two codes are topping the list of business codes that the firms belong to. However, many horse-related companies work in more than one business area and in other areas than the above two. Below in Table 2 we present the ten most common business codes among the selected companies.

**TABLE 2**  
**THE TEN MOST COMMON BUSINESS INDUSTRY CODES IN THE HORSE-RELATED INDUSTRY**

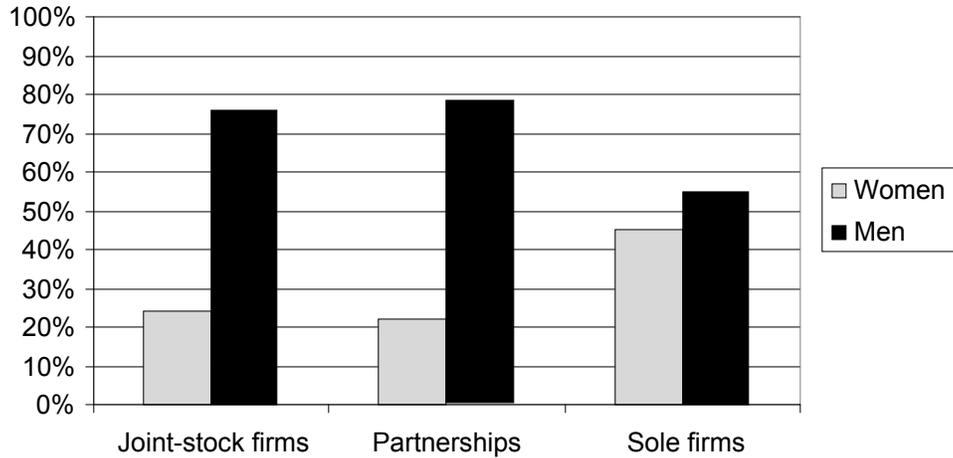
<b>Top-ten business areas (BIC) in the sample</b>	<b>Percent of the population</b>
Horse racing	31,9 %
Breeding	29,0 %
Consulting	3,7 %
Miscellaneous farming	3,5 %
Other leisure and recreation activities	2,6 %
Sports and leisure education	2,3 %
Retail sale of sports and leisure goods, except bicycles and boats	2,2 %
Accounting and bookkeeping	1,3 %
Freight transport by road	1,2 %
Letting of premises	1,2 %

As can be seen, the business codes not directly linked to horses are small in size in relation to the leading two horse related codes. While “consulting” and “accounting and bookkeeping” are examples of codes making the horse-related part a side business, the other six are codes are examples of a business where the horse-related part is central.

#### *Representation*

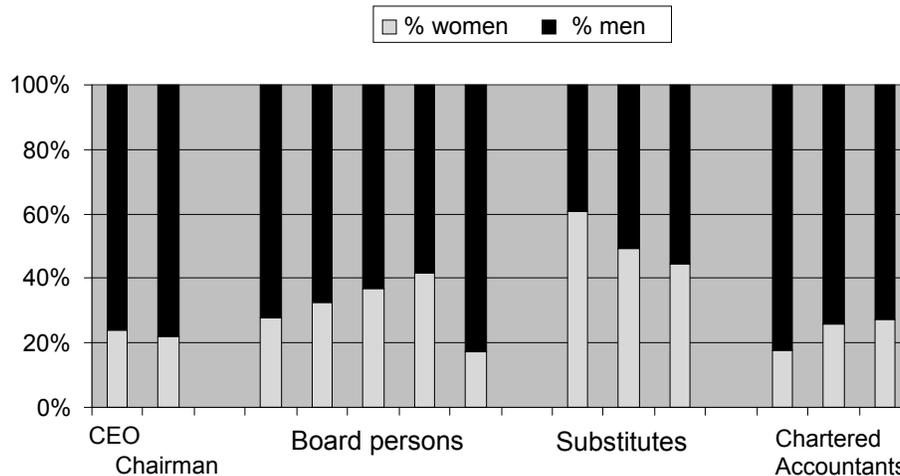
Based on the 7504 firms, we found that males are leading about 70 % of the firms. As can be noted in Figure 1 below, the representation of women is highest in sole firms (44 %), while it is considerably lower in joint-stock firms (24 %) and partnership firms (22 %). However, due to that gender of leading actor is not reported for all firms, the numbers are uncertain, especially for joint-stock firms where only 743 of 3546 (21 %) have data on gender. For partnerships the corresponding number is 817 of 1086 (75 %), and for sole firms the leading actor is fully known. For sole firms, the registration identity is equal to social security number for the leading actor, and in Sweden it is possible to obtain both age and gender from the social security number.

**FIGURE 1  
THE REPRESENTATION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN LEADING  
POSITION IN THE THREE COMPANY FORMS**



We will now look more into detail in the three company forms. For joint-stock companies there are five categories to study. Except for CEO, there is also a chairperson, board members, substitute board members and assigned chartered accountants. Figure 2 below show the representation in the five categories.

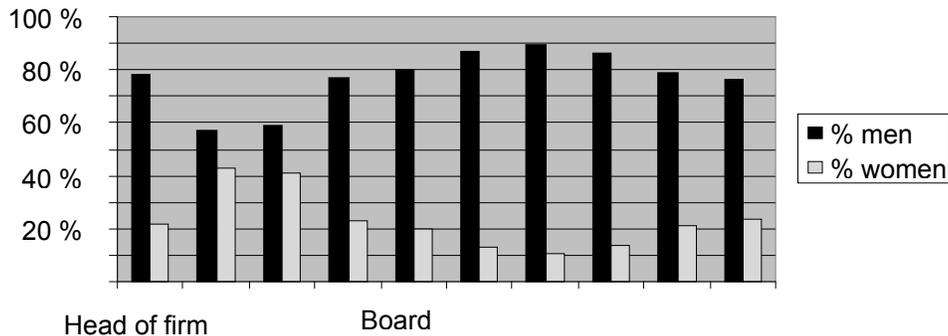
**FIGURE 2  
REPRESENTATION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN JOINT-STOCK  
COMPANIES IN DIFFERENT LEADING POSITIONS**



As can be seen, men are clearly dominating the leadership positions in joint-stock firms. It is only in the position as main (first) substitute board member that women are in majority. Both main power positions - CEO and chairperson - are clearly dominated by men.

For partnership firms, there are only two positions – head of firm and board member. However, since these partnerships can involve many actors, there are often more board members in these firms. In Figure 3 below, the representation is displayed.

**FIGURE 3  
REPRESENTATION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN PARTNERSHIP COMPANIES IN  
DIFFERENT LEADING POSITIONS**



As already displayed in Figure 1, the leading actor is a man in most cases, with only one woman for every four men. However, on the board the representation is more equal, with a representation of more than 40 % for the first two board members, maybe indicating that many of these firms are partnerships within a family. The reason why the representation drops for board members above the first two, may be that this company form is used for co-owning a race horse, which typically involves much more men than women.

Besides representation in relation to company form, the representation in relation to size is also important to understand. In Table 3 below we display the representation for the three company forms in relation to size. For joint-stock firms, the traditional size groups are used, based on the number of employees: Micro (< 10), small (10-49), Medium-sized (50-249), and large (> 250) companies. Partnership and sole firms are instead divided into four size groups based on turnover: < 199 kSEK, 200-499 kSEK, 500-1499 kSEK, and, > 1500 kSEK.

**TABLE 3  
REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN LEADING POSITIONS FOR DIFFERENT  
TYPES AND SIZES OF FIRM**

Type of firm	Position	Total - all sizes		Micro		Small		Medium		Large	
		Persons	% women	Persons	% women	Persons	% women	Persons	% women	Persons	% women
Joint-Stock	CEO	743	24	604	24	65	8	6	17	2	0
						<199 kSEK	200-499 kSEK	500-1499 kSEK		>1500 kSEK	
Partnerships	Head	758	22	547	21	94	28	88	25	29	10
Sole firm	Owner	2634	44	1856	48	400	42	287	32	91	12

The results indicate that men dominate stronger as the companies get larger. Women have most influence in the smallest companies, but still only slightly more than 20 % of the leading actors in the

smallest joint-stock and partnership firms are women. For the smallest sole firms, the representation is practically equal. Next, we will turn to the questionnaire material.

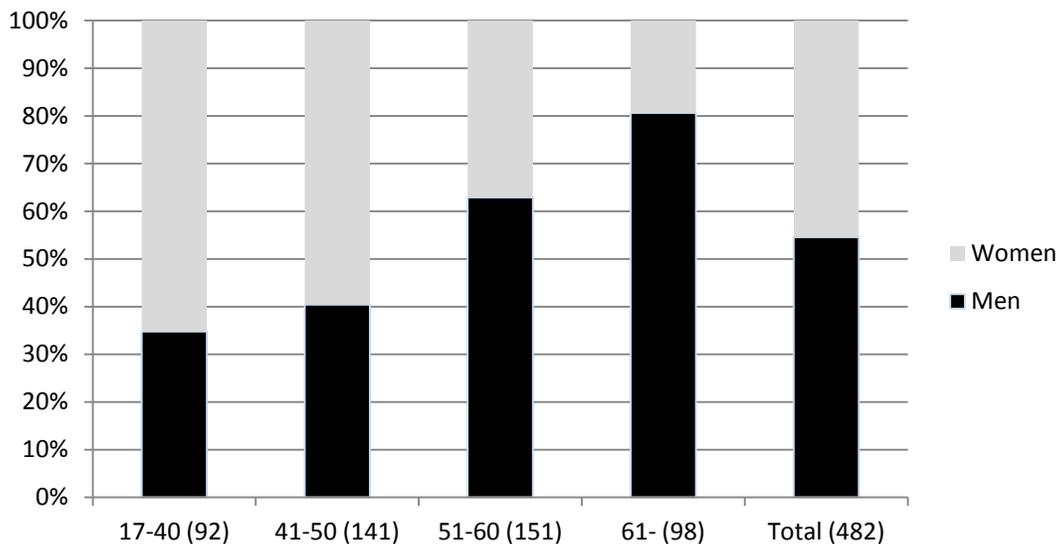
### Questionnaire Study

Based on the 520 returned questionnaires, racing is the largest business area followed by breeding, services, riding and products. Only five companies answering the questionnaire worked with horse tourism.

### Representations

When looking at the representation of men and women based on age (See Figure 4), we find an interesting pattern. On an overall level, the representation is fairly equal, with about 46 % women and 54 % men, but in the age group this is not evident. Rather, among the companies with the oldest leader, four out of five leaders are men and in the companies with the youngest leaders two out of three are women.

**FIGURE 4**  
**REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND MEN IN LEADING POSITIONS**  
**BASED ON AGE GROUPS**

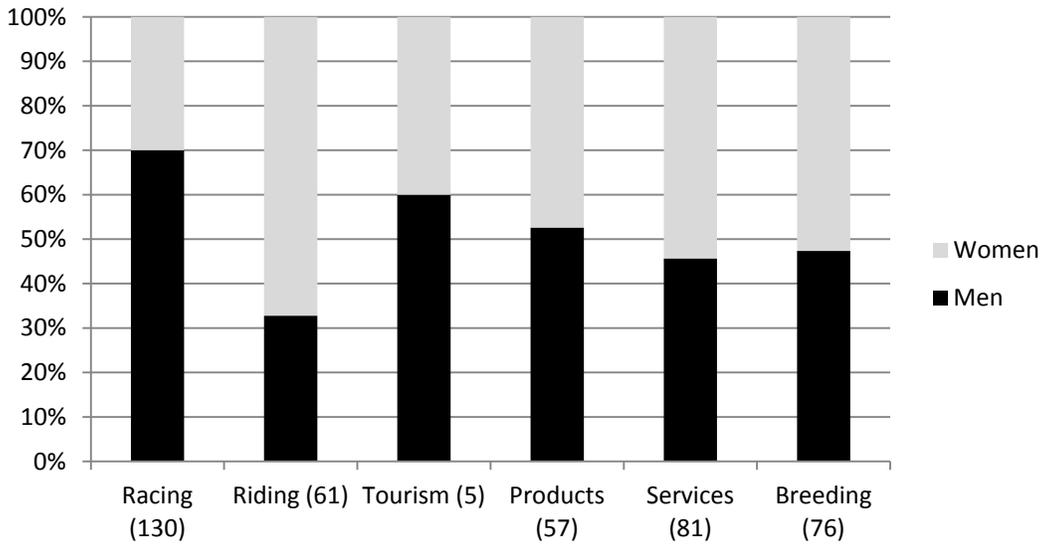


When instead looking at the representation based on sub-categories in the industry (see Figure 5), we find clear indications that racing is dominated by men, while riding is dominated by women. For the other four categories, there is almost equal representation.

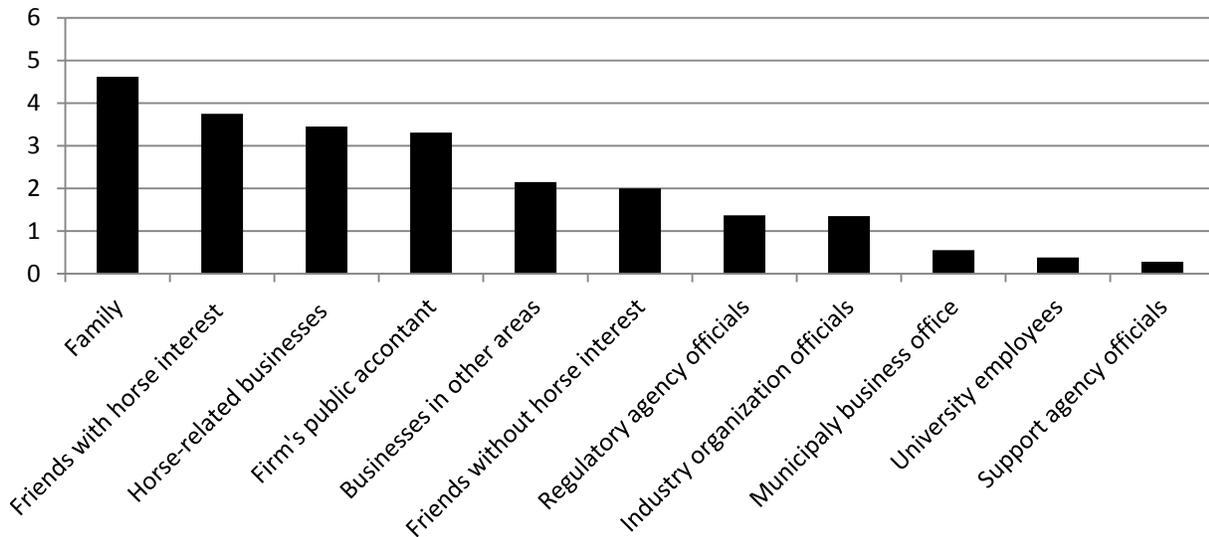
### Relations and Motives

When asking the entrepreneurs about their valuable network contacts it becomes clear that these mainly are found “close to home”. Only the categories “Family”, “Friends with horse interest”, “Horse-related businesses” and “Firm’s public accountant” are perceived as important (score above 3 on a scale from 0 to 6). It also becomes clear that the entrepreneurs overall do not get much from contacts with universities and support agencies (See Figure 6).

**FIGURE 5  
REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND MEN IN LEADING POSITIONS  
BASED ON SUB-CATEGORIES IN THE INDUSTRY**

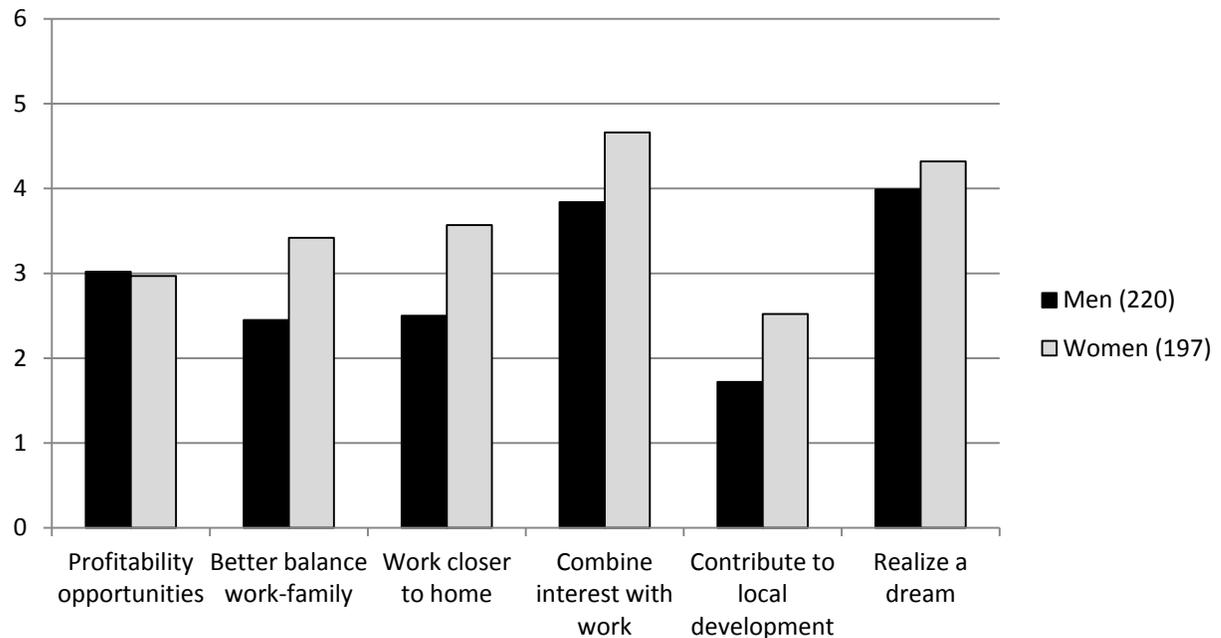


**FIGURE 6  
THE NETWORK CONTACTS AND HOW THEY CONTRIBUTE TO THE  
HORSE-RELATED BUSINESS**



Turning to motives, Figure 7 displays how men and women account for their motives to be a horse entrepreneur. Profitability motives are at the same level, but while women have four stronger motives for their business venture, men only have two. This is due to that women have stronger motives to combine work and family and be able to work closer to home. It is interesting to note that both women and men are primarily motivated by realizing a dream and combining their interest with work. As can be noted, women overall have a stronger reported motivation.

**FIGURE 7**  
**MOTIVES FOR RUNNING A COMPANY IN THE HORSE-RELATED INDUSTRY –**  
**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN**



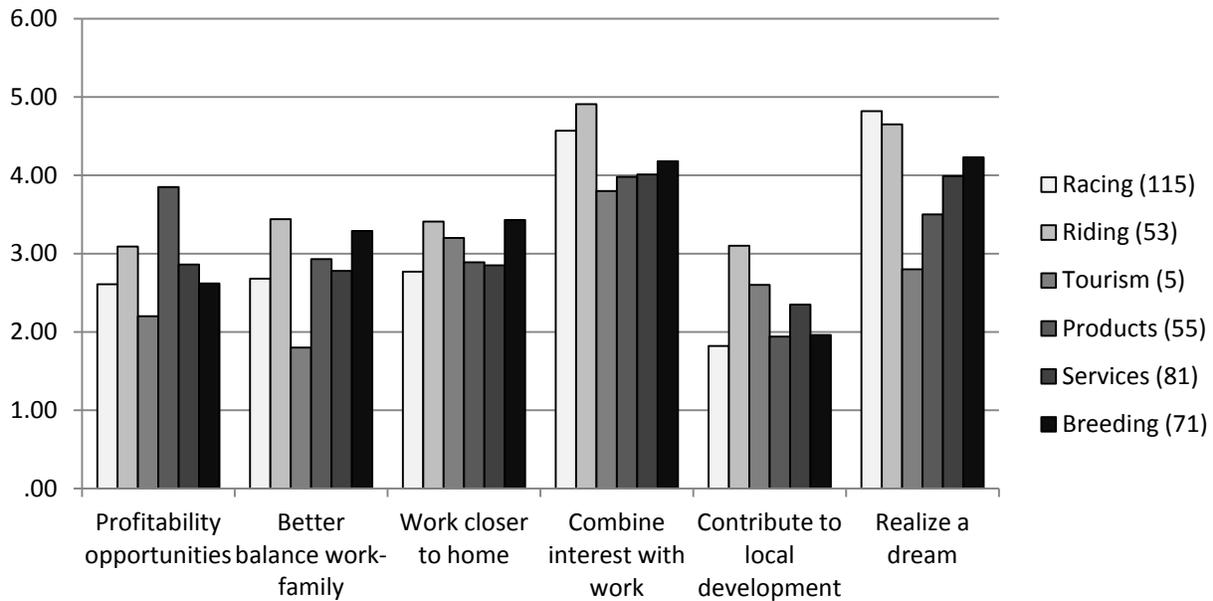
For the final aspect of the questionnaire material, Figure 8 displays motivation in relation to the subsections. We will mention a few results that we find interesting. First, it seems entrepreneurs in the product sector are more driven by profitability and less by realizing a dream compared to other sectors. Second, even though racing and riding are very different in terms of representation, the entrepreneurs display similar motivation for their enterprise. These two groups are the highest in “Realizing a dream” and “Combine interest with work”, maybe indicating that these two areas are the main outlets for passion-based entrepreneurship in the horse industry.

**Glimpses of the Industry from Reports**

There is an ambivalent picture of the opportunities in the horse-related business that arises from the reports. It is both described as a promising and a problematic industry in economic terms. In LRF:s folder; “The horse as a business concept” (Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund, 2008) the view is positive. The optimistic heading in the introduction about future prospects is based on two main arguments. First, there is evidence that horse-related ventures generally are becoming more popular, and second, new types of companies have emerged - companies that recently were marginal part-time ventures but today are developing the industry. In line with this, there are beliefs that the riding sector will create demands for new services, for instance education of horses and riders (Hästnäringens Nationella Stiftelse, 2008). One business segment that has potential is horse tourism. According to Ivarsson (2007) horse-related tourism is still relatively small-scale in Sweden but it is predicted to grow substantially. When looking at the problems, trotting and galloping, the traditional economic backbone of the business is declining (Falkhaven, 2009, Ivarsson, 2007). This is due to that the vast majority that practice trotting and galloping are men in their middle ages (Falkhaven, 2009). Lundmark (2009) also paints a gloomy picture of the industry, where high costs and low profitability make many struggle for survival. It is also argued that there are too many rules and regulations that make it difficult and expensive to be an entrepreneur in this business (Lundmark 2009, Falkhaven 2009, Hästnäringens Nationella Stiftelse, 2008). The industry is also suffering from being fragmented and overly traditional in terms of technology used. Most firms are very small and rely on equipment that is dated (Wallertz & Bendroth, 2009). The picture is that it

dominated by sole firms and small-scale partnerships (Hästnäringens Nationella Stiftelse, 2008; Ivarsson, 2007). But there are also missing knowledge about the horse industry in the society. The tax revenue from farmers, vets, transport companies, services of different kind don't get recognized as coming from the horse industry within the municipality (Svala 2006).

**FIGURE 8**  
**MOTIVES FOR RUNNING A COMPANY IN THE HORSE-RELATED INDUSTRY –**  
**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SUB-CATEGORIES OF THE INDUSTRY**



### Representations

Both men and women are represented as horse entrepreneurs, but women are clearly overrepresented. Many hold that in the future female entrepreneurs will be much more common (Hästnäringens Nationella Stiftelse, 2008). For example, in a folder from the government office for agriculture (Jordbruksverket) about prospects in the horse sector (Grundberg & Mohlin, 2008) 16 entrepreneurs were presented and of these 11 were women. A recent view is that:

*“The modern horse business entrepreneur is often a young woman in the riding sector who has been trained in one of the country's many horse education centers and then started their own business, focusing in particular on riding, breaking in horses and racing activities. The other commonly-seen horse entrepreneur is a middle-aged woman with two to three mares working with breeding of racehorses. These two "characters" are quite representative of the modern horse business in today's Sweden” (Hippcom, 2009, p.4).*

### Relations, Motives and Processes of Creating Meaning.

The entrepreneur in the horse business seems to have some credibility problems. First there is a directed criticism to the entrepreneur itself:

*“the horse owner must be much more professional as an entrepreneur. Often, they possess great expertise about the horse, but maybe not as much knowledge in terms of doing business” (Falkhaven, 2009, p 21)*

This is also related to professional business networking: Lundmark (2009) has found from her study that the horse entrepreneur has a good network to “talk horse” but lacks the professional business network to find opportunities to boost their business. But the problem is also in relation to authorities.

*“Horse entrepreneurs or wish-to-become horse entrepreneurs are often not treated seriously, either by the employment agency or by public services.” (Falkhaven, 2009, p 21)*

There is an image of how an ideal business should be run, which is not in line with many companies in the horse sector. In order to secure a satisfactory overall income the horse entrepreneur combines several companies and perhaps also an employment. This is often discussed in relation to the industry:

*“There are people with ten different companies. What about them? Are they able to live on each of their ten companies or all together? It must be okay to have three companies and one half-time job if you so wish. The scale can never be a measure of professionalism” (Bendroth & Falkhaven, 2009, p.29).*

Perhaps this has to do with the entrepreneur’s motive for starting their business. It seems the passion for the horse is a strong foundation for the business (Bendroth & Falkhaven 2009), which can lead to that the economical business aspect becomes secondary:

*“From this passion a company is created, which in many cases leads to low profitability and low productivity for the simple reason that one does not have sufficient knowledge of how a business should be conducted to achieve good economical results” (Hippcom, 2009, p. 4).*

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In the discussion we will focus on three areas that we find relevant. These are gender representations, motives for the entrepreneurs and the horse-related business in relation to others. Regarding gender representation of the entrepreneur in the horse-related industry, the women are overrepresented in the examined texts about the industry. However, the quantitative results portray a very clear picture that the horse-related companies are dominated by men, where only the smallest sole firms show an equal dominance in numbers. Thus, the more formal the company structure and the larger the company, the less women are found in leading positions. Moreover, in the horizontal aspect regarding positions on the board of joint-stock firms, women generally are found in the weaker positions as substitutes and in partnerships firms women seem to have a position as number two or three, with a man as number one. It is thus a clear segregation when it comes to positions and power not unlike other sectors (Kanter, 1977), but still we find women more visible in the pictures of entrepreneurs in the industry. Perhaps this is due to that the industry is changing gender as our data regarding leading position in relation to age clearly displays. Men are dominating among entrepreneurs above 50 years, while women are in clear majority among those younger than 50 years. Given that this pattern persists, women will in a not too distant future be in majority as entrepreneurs in horse-related business. This is both a threat and an opportunity to the industry. As the younger entrepreneurs are predominantly women, it makes the business more gender equal in terms of representation and creates more gender space for women (Butler, 1990). However, with too few men becoming entrepreneurs in the sector, this may at the same time signal that the industry has lost value (Holmquist, 2008). So, even if it is positive to see more female entrepreneurs in the industry, it is important to also attract men and be perceived as an industry that caters to both women and men.

Turning to the second theme, the motives for becoming a horse entrepreneur, women portray higher levels of motivation on all aspects except profitability, where they are equal. Based on this, it may be that women in general find more motives and meaning to engage as a horse entrepreneur. Specifically, women

are more motivated by the possibility to combine different aspects of life, such as family, interests and to be close to home. This is a general pattern for women in green industries (Pettersson, 2009). As noted, the profitability aspect is equal for men and women, and not the main motivation for their business. Realizing a dream and being able to combine their interest with work are both much stronger motivation forces than profitability for all in this industry. This is also found in the report texts, where passion for the horse is central. However, this does not correspond well with the norm of a successful company that is measured in relation to profitability aspects. The idea to combine different income sources, which is in conflict with the view of the successful company, may be a good strategy if the entrepreneur is driven by passion and want to get a more balanced life. For women it can be a way to balance different demands, such as still be responsible for children and home, and yet be able to hold on to something that is connected to their interest and also a way to not be stuck in traditional gender roles in the countryside. This highlights the dilemma the industry has, with a masculine way of measuring success, and more and more women entrepreneurs that have to deal with this demand. And, if profitability goals are not reached, the women are portrayed as inadequate “hobby” entrepreneurs, when they want to combine different sources of income. As can be evidenced by the fairly high motivation for profitability among “product” entrepreneurs, not all businesses follow this pattern where the entrepreneur needs to “stitch together” several income sources to be able to lead the life wanted. However, there is still a need for allowing new ways of doing business that does not exclude non-traditional entrepreneurs.

The last theme is about the horse-related business in relation to others. Here, it is clear that horse entrepreneurs rely heavily on contacts within the horse industry. The reason for this may perhaps be the skeptical attitude that the entrepreneurs seem to meet from outside actors when not complying to the mold of the traditional entrepreneur. A recent study by Lindberg (2010) shows that women, due to that they are not fitting the norm for innovation systems, have problems to get access to these systems and the resources found in them. Even if this is the case, the entrepreneurs need to find a way to become more active and at the same time try to raise acceptance for their way of doing business. Perhaps by building stronger connections to the green industries, experience industries and tourism developers, horse related firms could increase the overall opportunities of the industry in the future.

In closing, the challenge for horse entrepreneurs is to handle a female gendered industry, with a masculine logic in doing business, which is experiencing a changed pattern in how the horses are used for value creation. Perhaps this can be better handled if we can build a better acceptance in society for the usefulness of more small-scale diversified businesses that can survive as a part-time business, which in the longer run become recognized alternative business models that can suit countryside living women and men.

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