How women entrepreneurs manage the digitalization of their business
Initiating a dialogue between the entrepreneurship as practice approach and the theory of bricolage

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Abstract: The paper seeks to explain through the prism of bricolage and practices how women make their businesses digital. Based on the fact that women often create small ventures in service activities without much digital content, and find it difficult to make their business model and venture evolve and grow, we argue that these entrepreneurs are threatened by the pressure to become digital with their existing business models. In an attempt to understand how women entrepreneurs manage to make their ventures digital, the analysis of three extreme cases from the mentoring industry through two theoretical prisms – the theory of bricolage and entrepreneurship as practice – reveals that women who “bricole” while making their business digital are mostly those who are not embedded in masculine norms of entrepreneurship. We note the signs of bricolage cognition during the digitalization. Data will allow us to establish a hypothesis according to which bricolage cognition might be gendered. We also note that the choice of a familiarity-based or conventional bricolage as expressed in the three cases are mostly achieved via practices of networking, and by the social beliefs women have inherited during past experience or from their exchanges with peers. This article provides a first dialogue between the emerging literature on EAP (entrepreneurship as practice) and the widely diffused theory of bricolage.

Keywords: gender; digitalization; EAP; bricolage
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Introduction

Following the call from the European Commission for more “participation of women in the tech sector” that “will boost the economy and allow for their full participation in society,” especially in an increasingly digital world, this paper aims to better understand how women digitalize their venture. Based on the theory of bricolage and entrepreneurship as practice (EAP), it also aims to enter a dialogue between these two theoretical approaches. The construct of bricolage emerged thanks by observing practices (Duymedian & Rüling, 2010; Le Loarne & Maalaoui, 2015). By definition, the EAP approach (if not a downright theory) refers to the analysis of entrepreneurial practices (Gherardi, 2009). Surprisingly enough, the literature on bricolage applied to the contexts of entrepreneurship appears to focus more on the aspects of resources than to the practices by which entrepreneurs act/work with their resources (Baker & Nelson, 2005), and describes bricolage variety from this perspective (Vanevenhoven et al., 2011).

Moreover, the literature on bricolage in the field of entrepreneurship does not follow the emerging trends of study currently being carried out in other contexts, such as in the field of organizational studies. Nor have they to date embraced the construct of collective bricolage (Lounsbury, 1998). These two reasons allow room for a dialogue between/about these two theories, especially while considering how both theories define the practice and refer to what entrepreneurs actually do in practice.

With this in mind, we suggest studying the context of entrepreneurial digitalization. We agree with Wittkop et al. (2018), Eller et al. (2020) and other authors, according to whom “New digital technologies have transformed the nature of uncertainty inherent in entrepreneurial processes and outcomes as well as the ways of dealing with such uncertainty (…therefore) in articulating the promise and value of such a digital technology perspective, we consider how it would build on and enrich existing entrepreneurship theories” (Nambisan, 2017, p. 1029). The recent literature on digital entrepreneurship mentions the changes in the way entrepreneurs operate by revealing avenues of opportunities (Nambisan, 2017) for social entrepreneurs (Richter et al., 2017) or any other entrepreneur seeking to make their venture international (Wittkop et al., 2018; Pergelova, Manolova, Simeonova-Ganeva and Yordanova, 2019) without really focusing on their changes in terms of practices.

In the following, we focus our analysis on women entrepreneurs who are often seen as running poorly-growing ventures (Brush et al., 2009). Adopting the posture of activist researchers (Rouse & Woolnough, 2018), we argue that entrepreneurial practices are gendered, i.e. women who are eager to adopt male norms are also eager to make their business grow. On the contrary, women who maintain a more female attitude towards developing specific practices of entrepreneuring (Rindova et al., 2009) fail to make their business grow. Based on this statement, digital entrepreneurship analysis remains all the more interesting. The innovation literature mentions how women have a specific attitude towards the adoption of new, i.e. digital technologies (Hornig, 2012). Women are eager to adopt new technologies when they are understood as delivering a potentially social impact (Tsourela & Roumeliotis, 2015), or when their working habits are respected (Novek, 2012).

Following the protocol by Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007), we propose a comparison between three digitalization case studies of existing women businesses. These three longitudinal cases illustrate the different gendered practices these women respectively adopted while engaging in a digital strategy. All three women created their business in the mentoring/coaching industry. Although coming from the same region, they followed different gendered career paths before
creating their venture. By referring to narratives, one possible solution to capturing practices (Watson, 2009), we are able to follow the entrepreneurial story of these women, especially while entering (or not entering) into a digital strategy. While the first woman succeeded in digitizing and making her venture grow, the second one – who also digitally created her venture – did not succeed in making her business grow. The third woman decided not to change her business model and/or digitalize her business model, and succeeded with her existing business approach.

Using these three longitudinal illustrative cases, we show that women mostly digitally shift their business using a cognition of familiarity-based bricolage for the content, and a conventional bricolage for their choice of platform and technologies. Our data allows us to generate the hypothesis according to which bricolage cognition might be gendered. We also note that the choice for a familiarity-based or conventional bricolage as expressed in the three cases are mostly achieved via practices of networking and by the social beliefs women have inherited during their past experience, or from exchanges with their peers.

This paper is structured as follows: In the first section, we introduce the literature review that is composed of a state of the art on women digital entrepreneurship, together with a look at the key concepts associated with the theory of bricolage, the limits that have been addressed regarding this theory, and why the EAP approach might also be relevant to our research question. Research design and findings are presented in Sections 2 and 3. We conclude our paper with a discussion on the consistency of our results, as well as on the existing bricolage literature, and by initiating a dialogue between the theory of bricolage and the EAP approach.

I. Literature review

This section introduces the research frameworks we apply to explain how women entrepreneurs make their venture digital. In the first part, we discuss the various definitions of digital entrepreneurship, specifying that women are more or less present in digital entrepreneurship depending on the type of technologies involved. In the second part, we introduce the theory of bricolage we use to answer our research question. We will delve into the reasons for using it, and introduce the theory of bricolage and its key ideas. We then will discuss the limitations on how this theory has been used and developed by entrepreneurship scholars. In the final part, we introduce the EAP approach, explaining its relevance for our research purpose, and presenting its key principles that are grounded in the construct of practice.

I.1. Women entrepreneurs in the digital entrepreneurship era

I.1.1. Digital entrepreneurship: What kind of digital entrepreneurship for women entrepreneurs?

The digital economy is increasingly changing both the nature of competition as well as market rules (Alonso and García, 2018[1]). Technology appears to be more than just a framework for entrepreneurship. It also creates opportunities, decisions, operations, and outcomes. New digital technologies such as information and communication tools (ICT), social media, 3D printing, and big data have transformed the world over the last twenty years; entrepreneurship has of course been impacted by this. Daviddson and Vaast (2010) define digital entrepreneurship as “the pursuit of opportunities based on the use of digital media and other information and communication technologies” (p. 4). But digital entrepreneurship is not only about technological business or high-tech firms (McAdam, et al., 2020). The challenge of better understanding the impact of these new technologies on the economic and social worlds
requires a wider approach when considering the technological element of the digital world, especially its integration and use (Nambisan, 2017).

When considering its technological aspects, Nambisan (2017) shows that digital entrepreneurship is also based on three kinds of digital technologies (Table 1). These three-dimensional, powerful technologies have also extensively modified entrepreneurship and how it is practiced (Alonso and Garcia, 2018). So the integration of those three technological dimensions within companies can be compared to the digitalization process, defined as the use of digital technology to create and harvest value in new ways (Gobble, 2018, p. 57). Just one example of this is the online service Uber whose business model has been customized and applied to many industries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digital Artifact</th>
<th>Digital Platform</th>
<th>Digital Infrastructure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defined as a “digital component, application, or media content that is part of a new product (or service) and offers a specific functionality or value to the end-user.”</td>
<td>Defined as a “shared, common set of services and architecture that serves to host complementary offerings, including digital artifacts.”</td>
<td>Defined as “digital technology tools and systems that offer communication, collaboration, and/or computing capabilities to support innovation and entrepreneurship.”</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Nambisan (2017, p. 1030) and Nambisan, Wright and Feldman (2019)

Digital entrepreneurship appears to be at the crossroads of entrepreneurship and information systems (Alonso and Garcia, 2018). Considering technology infusion through existing companies therefore is a part of the entire challenge of understanding digital entrepreneurship and its impacts. Moreover, following Gobble (2018), digitalization (or becoming digital) requires “a visionary digital value proposition that offers the opportunity to redefine a business — and possibly even an industry.” This is consistent with the idea that the digital world transforms business models: integrative new ways of using/articulating digital technologies emerge within companies. Furthermore, Berger and Kuckertz (2016) show that women are important drivers of the digitalization process, reinforcing the interest of this research as a result.

The recent literature on digital entrepreneurship mentions the changes in the way entrepreneurs operate by revealing avenues of opportunities (Nambisan, 2017) for social entrepreneurs (Richter et al., 2017), or for any other entrepreneur seeking to make their venture international (Wittkop et al., 2018, Pergelova, Manolova, Simeonova-Ganeva and Yordanova, 2019) without really focusing on their changes in terms of practices. Furthermore, according to Nambisan (2017), little research has been conducted on theorizing “the specific role of digital technologies in shaping entrepreneurial opportunities, decisions, actions and outcomes.” This is why greater attention should be paid to everyday interactions with the digital technology that leads to the creation of newly-founded firms (McAdam et al., 2020) or new business models (Kraus, Palmer, Kailer, Lukas, Kallinger and Spitzer, 2018). Also, what are the digital competencies and/or backgrounds required to deal with digital entrepreneurship and technologies? (Ngoasong and Zisuh 2018)
I.1.2. Considering the digitalization of women ventures / How to play with masculine norms

The digital environment has been presented in recent years as a unique entrepreneurial space. LeBlanc (2015) has even suggested that anyone can create a business with as little as a laptop, something to sell, and imagination. Digital technologies here would clearly facilitate entrepreneurship (McAdam et al., 2020). For example, the internet provides an environment with low entry barriers and a rich information setting, offering significant potential for people who were previously excluded from “brick and mortar entrepreneurship” (Novo-Corti, Varela-Candamio and Garcia-Alvarez, 2014; McAdam et al., 2020). Internet technologies are reputed as enabling greater economic involvement for people who are socially marginalized and/or under-resourced (Dy, Marlow and Martin, 2017; Dy, Martin and Marlow, 2018). According to this, digital technologies should offer a wide number of business opportunities for women, even though significant gender gaps in entrepreneurship participation rates continue to persist (Sorgner, Bode, Krieger-Boden, Aneja, Coleman, Mishra, Robb, 2017). Recent research conducted in Finland also reveals that women managers and entrepreneurs are willing to go digital because they perceive digitalization as the means to foster their desired work-life balance (Rajahonka & Villman, 2019).

Women are according to some analyses an excluded group of people (Martin and Whright, 2005; Dy et al, 2017, 2018). Women’s entrepreneurship has been recently recognized as an important topic within the general entrepreneurship literature (Sundermeier, Wessel and Davidson, 2018). Past studies considering the online environment and digital women entrepreneurship have examined the relationships between women and digital technology (McAdam et al., 2020). The Internet as a digital infrastructure has for example been considered as a more neutral and meritocratic space with empowerment potential for women (Dy et al., 2017, 2018), one main reason for this being that women entrepreneurs are often seen as having poorly-growing ventures (Brush et al., 2009) and low creation rates (Marlow and McAdam, 2015).

However, especially considering the women engagement rate level in entrepreneurship, Shneor, Camgoz and Karapinar (2013) demonstrate that there are differences between developed countries like Norway where women are less engaged in entrepreneurship than their male counterparts; and in developing countries like Turkey, whose male and female entrepreneurial engagement rates are similar. Recently, Berger and Kuckertz (2016) used a sample of 20 international technological startup ecosystems to prove that women represented only 19% of entrepreneurs, showing the low rate of women in digital and technological entrepreneurship, and once again highlighting underlying barriers that women have to face when engaging in entrepreneurship activities.

Gender differences in digital entrepreneurship can also be seen in the way men and women finance their newly founded firms. Brush et al. (2004) argue that women have been significantly left out of equity investment such as venture capital and angel funds, demonstrating that “women received less than 5% of all venture capital money invested” (p. 11) in the US during the 1990s. Women are nevertheless also reputed as having many entrepreneurial qualities. Jenning and Brush (2013) have shown that women seek innovations that combine profit and social benefits, which is in line with Kidder and Parks, (2001) and Meek and Sullivan (2013) who demonstrate that women are more altruistic and helpful. Berger and Kuckertz (2016) have also shown that women are furthermore key drivers of digitalization.

From a broader point of view, Meek and Sullivan (2013) show that women do not differ significantly from men in terms of entrepreneurship economic outcomes, but instead in terms of non-economic outcomes like trust and satisfaction. Considering entrepreneurship, non-
economic outcomes of digitalization would therefore be an interesting way to obtain deeper understanding of digital entrepreneurship. This may lead to questions about how women use specific digital technology as defined by Nambisan (2017) to overcome digital entrepreneurship entry barriers. Are women more infrastructure-, artifact-, or digital platform-oriented (see Table 1 above for definition) in an effort to limit the exclusion they are victims of in the world of entrepreneurship? How can women digitalize their company to deal more easily with things like the high-tech sector, or with social norms that are reputed to be more male-oriented (Loscocco and Robinson, 1991; Mayer, 2006)? These statements lead us to argue that digital entrepreneurial practices are gendered; we will adopt the posture of activist researchers as we explore this (Rouse & Woolnough, 2018).

These past results make clear that gender differences continue to exist. Stereotypes considering a more sectoral approach show that high-tech sectors may still be more male-oriented. The debate on differences between women and men in digital entrepreneurship is still relevant in the 21st century, especially when considering cultural gender-based norms, even if digital work is an environment where women can feel comfortable and thrive in (McAdam, Crowley and Harrison, 2019).

Women who are eager to adopt male norms are also eager to make their business grow. On the contrary, women who maintain a more female attitude when entrepreneuring (Rindova et al., 2009), i.e. they develop specific practices of entrepreneuring, fail to make their business grow (Yacus et al. 2019). With this in mind, analyzing the case of digital entrepreneurship remains all the more interesting because the innovation literature mentions that women have a specific attitude towards the adoption of new technologies, particularly digital ones (Hornig, 2012). Women are also eager to adopt new technologies when they potentially have a social impact (Tsourela & Roumeliotis, 2015) or when their working habits are respected (Novek, 2012). This is consistent with Meek and Sullivan’s (2013) findings on the altruistic and helpful behavior of women in entrepreneurship. Only women with male androgynous characteristics report a more positive attitude towards new technologies such as computers (Gilbert et al., 2003).

To the best of our knowledge, and according to Paoloni et al. (2019), the impact of the digital revolution on women entrepreneurship in particular remains unaddressed. No recent research appears specifically dedicated to the impacts of digitalization for women entrepreneurs when they are working to establish their company. These transformations were particularly relevant during the advent of the digital world in the 2000s when many basic digital competencies including e-mail, digital calls, social media, smartphones, etc. were still considered disruptive digital technologies (see the definition by Nambisan (2017) and Gobble (2018)).

Although digital technologies continue to influence all activities of life, only a few studies focusing on women’s digital entrepreneurship are available. With this being the case, and following Ngoasong and Zisuh (2018) who have demonstrated that in some specific contexts entrepreneurial digital competencies “shape the entry (or start-up) choices and post-entry strategic decisions of digital entrepreneurs in response to context-specific opportunities and challenges associated with digital entrepreneurship,” we argue the necessity of considering all digital dimensions (see Table 1): the technology as such, the technological dimension of the business model, and the sector in which it operates. Moreover, regarding the dimension of competencies and educational backgrounds, women’s traits may also be of great interest in understanding in-depth how women manage the digitalization of their company. One note here is that too strong of a focus on women traits by the literature on women entrepreneurship (who they are, what they do, etc.) forgets that women participate in activities that compete with each other.

I.2. Considering the digitalization of women ventures through the prism of bricolage
I.2.1. Justifying the relevancy of using the bricolage construct to explore women’s digitalization ventures

In the field of entrepreneurship, bricolage as a construct has mostly been theorized by observing two activity domains. Its use initially emerged in the study of tech entrepreneurship (Baker et al., 2003) and has intensified in the field of social entrepreneurship (Fayolle et al., 2018). Despite their strong differences in terms of institutions and norms (Desa, 2012), both activities are characterized by the perception of a lack of resources. On the one hand, social entrepreneurs often face a lack of finances, while on another, high-tech entrepreneurs might have more access to funding, while at the same time often being confronted with technical crises that oblige them to find extra financial, technological, and human resources. Section 1 noted how women who operate in the field of digital platforms suffer from financial resource scarcity. This is also the case for those who work in more traditional services and aim to make their business digital.

To our knowledge, despite the growing interest in this sub-field, the current literature has not yet used the concept of bricolage to examine the phenomena of digital entrepreneurship. Ghezzi (2019) shows that as one category of digital entrepreneurship, the digital startup is mostly developed through a lean start-up process in which the author identifies signs of bricolage that have been conducted by the entrepreneurial team. Even though he fails to explain the nature of the bricolage, Ghezzi does in fact focus on one aspect of digital entrepreneurship that remains closed off to the development of any tech entrepreneurship. Our paper focuses on an additional aspect of digital entrepreneurship: existing companies that aim to become sustainable by entering a digitalization process. This involves a change in terms of both business processes and business models. Here, research on business model innovation reveals that entrepreneurial bricolage positively mediates the link between exploratory orientation and business model innovations (Guo et al., 2016). In the same vein, Linna (2013) shows that innovations, i.e. business model innovations, are generated by bricolage. Ernkvist (2015) shows that the techno-social transformation process accompanying the business model innovation is led by a cognition of bricolage done by those who innovate. In other words, such changes in terms of business model are explained by the bricolage construct. These findings converge towards the results of Le Loarne & Maalaoui (2015) who focused on already-established companies, and that reveals how founders of high-tech sectors bricole while evolving the business process of their venture. They additionally show that high-tech entrepreneurs, contrary to low-tech entrepreneurs, mostly adopt conventional bricolage. For these reasons, we argue that the use of the bricolage concept might also explain how women entrepreneurs digitalize the activity of their ventures.

I.2.2. Bricolage as an individual or team cognitive process

With the possible exception of the work by Le Loarne & Maalaoui (2015), we note that the research conducted on the digitalization of business models and existing ventures we previously mentioned consider bricolage as a series of adjustments that are conducted by entrepreneurs in a trial and error process. However, with the concept in mind initially used by Levi-Strauss (1966) until its conceptualization (Le Loarne, 2005; Johnson, 2012), bricolage remains a complex construct at the core of one of the three mainstream theories commonly used in the field of entrepreneurship research (Fisher, 2012).

Bricolage is defined as making do by applying combinations of the resources at hand to new problems and opportunities (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Fisher, 2012). The literature on
entrepreneurship or organizational studies considers bricolage as an individual or team cognition process that can be opposed to the logic of optimization (Desa & Basu, 2013) or to the cognition of the engineer (Duymedjian & Ruling, 2010). Bricolage is not planned action, but instead mostly occurs where improvisation is required (Baker et al., 2003). This kind of cognitive process implies that the bricoleur is capable of identifying accessible resources. These can be technical, financial, material, or conceptual. Diverted from their initial purposes, they are re-integrated into another task. This kind of process implies that the bricoleur entertains knowledge about resources they are able to mobilize; it occurs via either familiarity (the bricoleur has knowledge of the resources), or convention (the bricoleur knows the norms and codes and is able to identify the appropriate resources they might use for the purpose) (Duymedjian & Ruling, 2010).

The literature often states that this cognition process occurs when the entrepreneur as an individual faces a lack of resources (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Linna, 2013). Amidst this lack of resources, most notably financial and/or time resources, the entrepreneur uses their creativity to recombine what is at hand for reaching their goal, achieving the desired outcome such as social impacts in the context of social entrepreneurship (Back et al., 2015).

I.2.3. Is bricolage related to identity or to the context? The limitation of the bricolage concept as theorized in the field of entrepreneurship

The literature implies that digital entrepreneurship might be gendered, or at least integrates gender norms in two different respects: First, females tend to be more practical than males in their decision to adopt any new digital technology or application (Gilbert et al., 2003; Tsourela & Roumeliotis, 2015). Second, women are often less involved in digital businesses (Marlow and McAdam, 2015; Berger and Kuckertz, 2016). Moreover, they express lower intention to create any business at all (Davidsson, 2006; Diaz-Garcia & Jimenez-Moreno, 2010, Fragoso et al. 2019) and face concerns about making it grow (Cliff, 1998, Davis & Shaver, 2012). We investigate the state of the art on bricolage in the following, asking whether the cognition of bricolage is gendered.

This topic raises the question of what makes an entrepreneur (or an entrepreneurial team) adopt bricolage. Research remains ambivalent on the subject. On the one hand, some research believes the context provokes the cognition: A lack of resources could initially explain the necessity to bricole with what individuals have on hand. On the other hand, focusing on a context of resource scarcity and social entrepreneurship, Zahra et al. (2009) reveal that entrepreneurs as individuals are eager to adopt this kind of cognition or not. The authors identify three types of social entrepreneurs: the “social bricoleur”, “social constructionist”, or “social engineer”. Depending on their identity or type, they develop specific ventures with specific characteristics and challenges. However, these same authors fail to explain what makes these entrepreneurs become which type of social entrepreneurs. They also assume that these entrepreneurs always adopt the same cognitive process while developing their venture in all of its development stages. Referring to the gendering of bricolage, we assume the findings of Zahra et al. (2009) that have widely been used and to date remain unrefuted (Fayolle & Jansen, 2018) among the community of entrepreneurship scholars. Are the entrepreneurs who bricole mostly women? This proposition requires investigation, but would be consistent with the statement according to which social entrepreneurs are mostly women (Ashe et al., 2011).

However, a proposition like this that is based on the link we are making between one aspect of identity (the gender of the founder) and their cognition faces two types of criticism. First, the literature on identity states that bricolage as a cognitive process contributes to the construction of identity (Klaasjan et al., 2018), meaning that the individual, especially in the case of student
refugees, would construct their identity by “bricoling” (Karam, 2018). Implicitly, these pieces of research converge towards the idea that any individual “bricoles” their self-perceived identity (Stinchfield et al., 2013). Duymedjian & Ruling (2010) go further by introducing a bricolage typology that depends on the cognition of the person as well as their familiarity with the object or knowledge he or she is “bricoling” with. Here, the construct of “familiarity-based bricolage” refers to the fact that some entrepreneurs are playing with a practice or norm. Le Loarne & Maalaoui (2015) show that entrepreneurs tend to create their venture, “bricoling” with the dominant business model that’s commonly adopted in their field. In other words, they are capable of developing an innovative business model for their venture once they have acquired a familiarity with the dominant business model. Whenever anyone bricoles, whatever the nature of it, the question then becomes understanding “when” and “under what context.” The purpose, as well as how and if these cognition processes differ, vary across people and contexts. Scholars who call for the adoption of the EAP approach furthermore blame “mainstream” theories of entrepreneurship such as the theory of effectuation and those of bricolage for focusing too much on the entrepreneur as an individual whose personal and social traits influence their entrepreneurial cognition (Thompson et al., 2020, p. 248). These theories fail to consider context (Welter & Gartner, 2016) and, moreover, what Thompson et al. (2020) call “societism” (op. cit., p. 249). The authors here refer to discourses or social patterns that infuse the cognition of the entrepreneur as well as their practices. In the practice tradition, the unit or center of analysis is not the entrepreneur per se but a duality of practice and connection. In other words: “Social practice theory studies the relationship between individuals and their greater environment” (Gartner et al. 2016; p. 813).

I.3. Considering the digitalization of women ventures through the prism of entrepreneurship as practice (EAP)

I.3.1. Bricolage as cognition or bricolage as practice?

Gartner et al. (2016) define a practice as follows: “Rather than a trivial action, a ‘practice’ is a routinized type of human performance consisting of several elements interconnected to one another. These are forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘tools’ and their use, background knowledge in the form of understanding and know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge” (p. 813). In entrepreneurship, as “field of practices” (Schatzki, 2011), these same researchers state that “Entrepreneurship practices are thus routinized ways in which entrepreneurship practitioners move bodies, handle objects, treat subjects, describe things and understand the world” (op. cit., p. 814).

Practices are the results of individuals (entrepreneurs for our purpose) whose actions are unconsciously infused among entrepreneurs, and that evolve into a defined “domain of practice” (O’Connor et al., 2007). “Domain of practice” refers to where these entrepreneurs have been educated, the social network they evolve in, the activity domain they are working in, etc.

If the entrepreneurship literature focuses on bricolage as a cognition that relies on individual traits and “self-perceived identity” (Stinchfield et al., 2012), we note that other literature, especially that in the field of organization studies such as managerial science, or in other fields such as the arts, sociology, or pedagogy, have also explored the construct of bricolage as a practice (Rogers, 2012). Among this enormous amount of work, just one example includes how Dezeuze (2008) states that bricolage in the arts remains a practice of materials assemblage and colors that are widely diffused among artists. In a similar vein, E-Cunha et al. (2008), focusing on strategic practices by companies, note that “improvisational bricolage” cannot only be typified, but is also a widespread practice by managers when facing an event or a reaction to something they failed to anticipate. Our purpose here is not an exhaustive
literature review of bricolage as practice, but simply to mention that the construct of bricolage is also considered a social practice that is diffused within a specific field (Suddaby et al., 2013). With this in mind, and following what Gartner et al. (2016) acknowledge, we can explore how bricolage that consists of assembling what the entrepreneur has at hand to tackle an identified task can be a practice embedded into the social life of the entrepreneur. In our case, this is the woman entrepreneur who is digitalizing her business. We furthermore argue the need to mobilize an entrepreneurship as practice approach to better understand how and why bricolage cognition is developed (Gartner, 1988).

I.3.2. Gender, entrepreneuring and entrepreneurial practices

Mainstream literature on women entrepreneurship initially focused on the study of women “as a category” of entrepreneurs that, because of their gender identity, would have developed not only the traits we introduced in Section I.1, but also produced “poor results” (De Bruin et al., 2006). However, the call from Alh (2006) coincides with the emergence of a more critical approach towards women entrepreneurship, arguing first that some women succeed in entrepreneurship according to the “traditional norms” of success assessment. This is because they first do not pursue the same objectives (Brush et al., 2009). In other words, the “3M” these authors introduce (money, management, market) are here impacted by gendered traits and differ across gender.

The recent literature goes even further, showing that entrepreneurial norms, which also include the norms established in the field of digital entrepreneurship, are gendered (Lewis, 2006; Bianco et al., 2017).

From another perspective, the EAP approach suggests that, in a context of male-dominated norms, women have the choice between “playing gender,” adopting male practices, or keeping with more feminine ones (Bruni et al., 2004a; Bruni et al., 2004b). Based on an ethnography with Italian women entrepreneurs, these researchers identify what they call five main processes of “entrepreneuring”: “Handling the dual presence (shuttling between differently gendered symbolic spaces); performing remedial work (to repair the cultural order in crosswise situations); boundary keeping (the defense of different symbolic spaces); ‘footing’ (which enables people to adjust their stances within a particular frame to disrupt its referents); and ‘gender commodification’ (the exploitation of the symbolic space of gender as terrain on which to (re)construct market relations)” (Bruni et al., 2005; p. 17).

Finally, the choice for adopting any practice of “entrepreneuring” could for some women be interpreted as a sign of emancipation (Rindova et al., 2009).

II. Research design

Our research aims from a bricolage and practice perspective to understand how women decide to digitalize their businesses. The theoretical approach we considered as appropriate for highlighting these processes (the theory of bricolage and the EAP approach) converged to assist in the study of the practices of these women entrepreneurs. We performed a longitudinal qualitative analysis with the objective of applying both theoretical approaches. We also decided to collect data that could shed light on how women entrepreneurs choose to digitize their venture, what they do in practice to achieve this, and with what objectives and results.

II.1. A comparative longitudinal study on three cases
We adopted a protocol similar to that by Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007) consisting of comparing extreme cases of the digitalization of already-established women businesses. Because many women create small business companies that operate in the service sector, we decided to focus our attention on the field of mentoring/coaching. We chose this because, by definition, it is mostly done by women and comprised of self-employed entrepreneurs. Moreover, this field is currently experiencing vast digitalization, with strides in the development of online coaching (Fielden & Hunt, 2011) that now represent 32% of all mentoring sessions.

Our research took place in France, a country recognized as welcoming towards women entrepreneurs, where they can find excellent financial support, along with a wide variety of women entrepreneur networks. Indeed, this country is ranked sixth in the world as the best place for women entrepreneurship (Aidis, 2017). Within the context of the mentoring industry in France, we focused our attention on three cases that we selected from our own network, and acknowledge their use (among several reasons) for the sake of convenience. We argue that this does not undermine the quality and objectivity of our research (Anderson, et al., 2019), and instead helped us acquire more information on what these women really do in practice.

Our three extreme cases A, B, and C tell the story of the businesses of women entrepreneurs. As recommended by Eisenhardt (1989), these cases are comparable because they all started under the same conditions: The three women entrepreneurs had strong experience in coaching (especially other entrepreneurs) in the field of strategic management and growth. They decided to create their own company and pursue face-to-face coaching/mentoring in the same field and geographical location in France, and during the same period of time (Table 1). Case A experienced a fast move to digitalization with the development of a narrow portfolio of business models, as well as success in terms of audience and profitability. On the contrary, Case B experienced a forced move to digitalization with the development of a chaotic portfolio of business models. The audience is wide but localized in specific geographical zones; Case B has yet to turn a profit. Case C has not yet gone digital. Apart from this first justification, we also chose these three cases based on their output. Following the literature on women entrepreneurship, we selected them because they represent masculine output (fast growth, profitability), feminine output (low profitability), and mixed output (depending on the evolution of the activity in general). We argue that working on cases that reveal different gendered digital entrepreneurial results is an interesting basis for identifying the association that might exist between gendered practices and gendered outputs of a venture’s digitalization.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Case A</th>
<th>Case B</th>
<th>Case C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feminine norms and outputs</strong> (Revenue &lt; 5K euros associated with venture’s digitalization)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masculine norms and outputs</strong> (Revenue &gt; 70K euros)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mix gendered output</strong> (Revenue &gt; 30K euros)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Profile of Women Entrepreneurs:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Previous Career</strong></td>
<td>Founder of several companies (restaurant, etc.) Consultant and coaching entrepreneurship</td>
<td>Founder - Head of SME (Specialization: exhibition fairs)</td>
<td>Development manager at an international tech company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education / Expertise</strong></td>
<td>Literature General management (Masters degree) No expertise in coding</td>
<td>General management Marketing and events No expertise in coding</td>
<td>Used to evolving within masculine domains (worked as HRM in a tech company, and with former heads of executive programs in the Iranian oil industry) Coach, HRM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity profile:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date of creation</strong></td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of coaching</strong></td>
<td>Coach of women entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Coach of women entrepreneurs and women managers</td>
<td>Coach of top managers at SMEs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date of digitalization</strong></td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of the digitalization</strong></td>
<td>□ Intense web communication (tips on social networks) □ Service is provided through a digital tool (Zoom)</td>
<td>□ Webinars □ e-mailings □ Courses and online coaching □ Website that provides extensive services and content</td>
<td>□ Provide online coaching using an existing platform (cooperation with a company that provides online coaching and expertise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stand-alone business (women has no other companies, i.e. no hybrid entrepreneurship)</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If hybrid entrepreneurship: Detail on the other activity</strong></td>
<td>□ No □ A few courses that are taught to some business schools or universities (less than 30 hours/year)</td>
<td>□ One aborted company (1 year) □ Conferences</td>
<td>□ Non-digital online coaching □ Adjunct professor at an international business school (as head of executive programs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other activities mentioned during the interviews</strong></td>
<td>□ Strong implication in one formal network of women entrepreneurs</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Social mentoring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II.2. The perceived practices of women entrepreneurs: Discourses and representations

Following Bruni et al.’s (2005) work on captured practices, we collected the stories and practices of women entrepreneurs via the discourses provided by the women entrepreneurs. Although we are aware that some practices are captured by ethnographic analysis (Thompson & Illés, 2020), we nevertheless note that data collection practice is consistent with what is currently being done in research to capture practices in entrepreneurship (Watson, 2009; Thompson et al., 2020; Thompson & Byrne, 2020) and strategic management (Vaara, 2010). These discourses were collected during a series of two interviews with the three entrepreneurs who agree to take part in the research. While the first interview focused on the general story of the venture told by the entrepreneur, the second related to more detailed practices and actions of the three women entrepreneurs. Each of the six interviews lasted between one and two hours. They were all conducted in May 2020 during a Covid-19 lockdown, and recorded and transcribed with the permission of the interviewees. This means that our approach did not literally observe the practices of the founders and what they really do in their everyday work.

II.3. Discourses analysis

The entire data was abductively coded in three steps. In the first step, we coded the practices of women entrepreneurs for making their venture digital. Here we referred to the typology of digitalization as introduced in Table 1, discerning between practices that would lead to digital artifacts, platforms, or digital infrastructure. Categories were coded based on the discourse content of the three women entrepreneurs. Based on what we considered as potential outputs of practices, we proceeded in a second step to coding how the women express their use of bricolage. To do this, we referred to the coding process adopted by Le Loarne & Maalaoui (2015) for identifying the nature of bricolage cognitions applied by high- or low-tech entrepreneurs for making their business process evolve. This coding choice was inspired by the work of Duymedjian & Ruling (2010) that differentiates between familiarity-based bricolage and conventional bricolage. In a third step, we focused on practices, some of which included bricolage. These practices were also coded abductively, and based on the definition of the nature of the practice,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-order categories</th>
<th>Second-order categories</th>
<th>Illustrations/ Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital artifact</td>
<td>Mailing campaign</td>
<td>Webinars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online exchanges (using varying software)</td>
<td>Communication through online social networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital platform</td>
<td>Platform sharing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital infrastructure</td>
<td>No category identified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Familiarity-based bricolage

"I used my Facebook account to tell the others what I was doing. I also used the platform of the professional network I was involved in even though the initial purpose of the platform was to provide information on the network." (Case A)

Conventional bricolage

Q: "Why did you decide to diversify your business model?"
A: "Well, you know, I'm a coach, and part of a network of coaches, and everyone develops online coaching. I didn't want to waste time or money investing in my own system. That's why I became a hybrid entrepreneur, and got in touch with a sort of network of coaches that sell one-hour coaching to those who want it. It does the job."

Assemblage / nature of resources
- Assemblage of businesses / activities

Context / reasons for bricolage
- I had no time
- I had no budget

Nature
- Diversifying the coaching activity with an online service
- Communicating on social networks about what I'm doing

Perceived reasons given to justify the practice
- "That's what we do in my network."
- (Case B): "This is what has to be done."
- Q: "How do you know that you need to proceed this way?"
  A: "Well, this is everything I've been taught, we talk about it in magazines, and at events. For instance, when I go to the Halle Freyssinet." [a major Parisian incubator that welcomes high-tech startups]
- Tip given by a friend

Output of the practice
- Performance criteria (revenue/emotion): "Well, this is fine for me since I receive lots of emotional support but, to be honest, on a financial level… it's not OK (laughs)." (Case A)

### III. Findings

This section introduces the key findings from our analysis. First, we note that women entrepreneurs bricole when making their business digital. Second, the data allows us to raise the hypothesis stating that bricolage cognition might be gendered. Third, we note that the choice of familiarity-based or conventional bricolage as expressed in the three cases are mostly conducted by practices of networking, by the social beliefs women have inherited during their past experience, or from the exchanges they have with their peers.

#### III.1. Adapting online content via familiarity-based bricolage, but going digital using conventional bricolage

The three cases we selected started in the same situation: the woman entrepreneurs created their activity in 2017, in the same major French city, and offering the same service of coaching and mentoring. The theory of bricolage reveals its different practices (Table 4). The data invites a discernment between two types of practices: developing the business online in terms of content and value proposition per se, and the practice of choosing the technical platform. Regarding the online content, we identified a discrepancy across cases: while Cases A and B appear similar in the cognition process, woman entrepreneur B talked about adopting another practice. All three referred to a practice of familiarity-based bricolage. Cases A and C talked about putting what they already knew to use (their coaching methods) and adapting them online. In other words, they never imagined changing the content of their service while going digital, and kept coaching the way they always had. The only thing Case A added was pictures.
on social media of where she is and what she is doing, such as a picture of her laptop, desk, or home office. This communicates to her audience she talks to on Facebook, as well as her professional network of women entrepreneurs she got in touch with a couple of months ago. Case B talked about some planned practices of content development that serve a new audience via a new way of operating. This woman was originally head of a fair that focused on women entrepreneurs. When she decided to move online and create her venture in 2017, she reused existing content she had previously collected. “My idea was to keep the willingness of leadership among women. My job is to encourage them by attending my webinars during which I develop my method.” (Question: “And when and how did you develop your method?”). “Well, I read a lot. I accumulate knowledge. I developed my coaching method from scratch but based it on this knowledge. For instance, I believe a paper on leadership published in Harvard Business Review makes sense, and matches my previous experience as a head of fairs. So, I can start explaining to other women what I have experienced and how the content of this paper makes sense (...)

If the content per se is mostly developed thanks to a practice of familiarity-based bricolage, the discourses reveal some bricolage practices for taking the business online only for cases A and C. This mostly consists of a conventional bricolage motivated by the pressure to improvise when facing an unexpected external event. As the woman entrepreneur in Case A explained: “Well… I had no choice but to go digital. My revenue had fallen to zero. The lockdown brought my contacts down to zero, and I felt useless. (...) I had to improvise and make a decision, do anything…so I went digital.” Entrepreneur C also related a similar perspective: “At that time, I learned that the exec program I was in charge of at the business school was going to close for political reasons. I wasn’t expecting this loss in earnings, and I had invested so much energy into the program…I had to make do with what I had around me…my network, especially my coaching network. I heard that an online coaching company had been created…so I could work from home and asked if I could join them as an expert.”

We coded these signs of bricolage as conventional because the knowledge these women had with the objects (the social network) was not based on something familiar, but instead driven more by convention and the willingness to improvise when facing an unexpected event.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Case A Feminine outputs</th>
<th>Case B Masculine outputs</th>
<th>Case C Mixed outputs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Declared origins (quote)</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adaptations of online content:</td>
<td>Same content, same process, but online</td>
<td>Progressive assemblage of what the woman knew (articles, information that are brought about by studies she collected) on the topic of women leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choice of the online social network she used to participate</td>
<td>&quot;I am really impressed by what the head of the professional network did. So this gave me the idea to be more present on social networks.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Well... I accumulated these things through reading.&quot; (Q: &quot;How do you choose what you read?&quot;) &quot;My network provides some ideas. For instance, I'm in touch with coaches and mentors who read the papers I mentioned. I also graduated from business school. We were given these types of papers to read back then.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moving online (improvisation)</td>
<td>&quot;I have no idea what the best platform or best system is. In that case, I just get inspired by what the others are using. If they're using them, this tells me it's OK.&quot;</td>
<td>Decision to go online Online process per se (no familiarity with tool but knowledge thanks to knowing the convention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actions on social networks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choosing Zoom as digital online tool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exchanging with other women entrepreneurs as friends</td>
<td>&quot;Once again, everyone does it in my field, meaning coaching of women. We like each other. The idea is to help each other too!&quot;</td>
<td>Encouraging women in a benevolent manner &quot;Be yourself,&quot; &quot;Don't give up. Look what I've accomplished.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caring for their economic and personal wellbeing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhancing results in terms of the wellbeing of her clients</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forgetting to develop the online pricing of the service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Case A Feminine outputs</td>
<td>Case B Masculine outputs</td>
<td>Case C Mixed outputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine Practices</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Mentioning everywhere in the mail the numbers behind her success □ Raising funds □ Taking part in international and national competitions □ Asking for investment</td>
<td>&quot;My father is an entrepreneur. I just observe and follow what he did: raising funds. Now, when I’m networking, I meet lots of business partners and that’s what they encourage me to do. That’s the practice. Entrepreneurship works this way.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;You know, I used to be a business developer for a masculine company. I was one of the only women. I liked it, and it didn’t bother me because I like challenges and I like negotiating. Of course I can help your business. But my service has a price.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III.2. Practices of bricolage and gendered practices and outputs for creating the company

Our three cases were chosen to contrast gendered outputs of digitalization. Our findings reveal that these outputs might be linked to gendered practices (Table 4). We note that case A shows signs of feminine practices of entrepreneuring as defined in the literature, and signs of masculine practice: “I care for my network. So I am really pleased because lots of my previous clients call me for tips. The fact that I have been able to reassure them is great. I receive messages on Facebook thanking me. That’s rewarding even in terms of business. Revenues, well… I don’t dare ask them for money (laughs)”. On the contrary, Cases B and C remained more ambivalent for different reasons. Although woman entrepreneur C did not express signs of care for her clients, she did express signs of well-being for herself. Her top priority is to combine what she calls “My right work-life balance. I want to go abroad and discover new things. But it’s also important that I protect myself, not working days and nights. Digitalization is great for that: I can work remotely, having my tea on my balcony with a mountain view. I don’t have to waste time travelling.” Case B’s weekly mailing campaign shows signs of caring for women entrepreneurs (Table 4). The explanations she provided during our interviews and the way she introduced herself and her services support a sense of her masculine practices: She mentioned her success by referring to the big numbers of clients and revenue. She participates in a wide number of professional networks, including financial and banking networks, and manages to communicate to national economic journals, getting her venture listed among the best economic places to invest in.

Besides this link between gendered results for the venture, as expressed and explained by women entrepreneurs themselves, and the gendered practices they describe, we note that Case A who adopts feminine practices mostly acts based on a practice of familiarity-based bricolage, while B only adopts a bricolage for developing her content, albeit not her business model or support. C appears to develop a mixed set of practices in terms of bricolage.

III.3. Findings about self-reflection by women entrepreneurs: Why adopt these practices?

Our findings also reveal some explanations expressed by the women entrepreneurs themselves on how they originally got the idea to adopt each practice they mentioned during their interviews (Table 4). It’s seen that familiarity-based practices are directly inherited by individuals, or by past experience, while conventional practices appear to have emerged via practices done in the network in which each respective woman entrepreneur operates. We also note that the use of practices, whether feminine or masculine, are declared as inspired by practices within the respective networks the women entrepreneurs evolve within.

IV. Discussion

This research emerged from the articulation between entrepreneurship as a practice theory and bricolage to better understand the digitalization process of women digital entrepreneurs. We revealed not only that both approaches remain compatible, but also that women bricole while digitalizing their ventures. They adapt the value proposition of their venture thanks to familiarity-based bricolage practices, but digitalize their business process using a conventional practice of bricolage. Second, women who adopt more familiarity-based bricolage tend to use more feminine practices, and achieve feminine outputs from their digitalized ventures. Women on the other hand who use less familiarity-based bricolage but more conventional bricolage and more masculine practices tend to obtain masculine outputs from their ventures. These practices are directly inspired by networks and past experiences that are done consistent with their development of a social belief, according to which they “are doing things right.”
These results can be discussed on three main levels. First, we can ask whether bricolage is gendered. Second, we can discuss the two respective contributions of the two theoretical frameworks we referred to.

**IV.1. Is bricolage gendered? Why not all women bricole the same way**

Our findings are consistent with those of Le Loarne and Maalaoui (2015) that show that both kinds of bricolage are linked to the nature of the activity. According to these authors, familiarity-based bricolage remains more present for low-tech activities, such as coaching or event social entrepreneurship. It is interesting to note that women are mostly present in these fields due to their higher concern with the common good and their more altruistic behavior (Hechavarria, Ingram, Justo, and Terjesen, 2012). From another perspective, our results could also explain the strong presence of bricolage in social entrepreneurship because of the feminine orientation nature of the social entrepreneurship sector, especially considering the use of technology in a digitalization context (Altinay, and Altinay, 2018).

Familiarity-based bricolage and convention-based bricolage also depend on the practices developed by entrepreneurs. A bricolage-gendered dimension was implied through the context of digitalization analyzed here. The more feminine the practices of the entrepreneur are (making sense, altruistic, and helpful) or combine profit and social benefits in the sense of Kidder and Parks, (2001) to digitalize their business, the more the bricolage will be adopted by the entrepreneur via familiarity-based bricolage. On the other hand, if the entrepreneurial practices are more masculine, bricolage will be more conventionally-based. As a result, entrepreneurs that are viewed here from an EAP perspective in a more male context are led to play gender roles (in a more feminine or masculine way) when it comes to their bricolage approach to their digitalization process, which is totally consistent with Bruni et al., (2004a; 2004b). The other main contribution of this study may reside in the fact that not all women bricole the same way, depending on the situation they are facing and networks in which they are involved. This is consistent with the “domain of practice” concept developed by O’Connor et al., (2007).

**IV.2. A dialogue on the EAP approach and the theory of bricolage for considering the practices of women entrepreneurs**

Bricolage is a practice. As with any other practice, it cannot be defined as either familiarity-based bricolage or conventional bricolage. Focusing on an analysis based on bricolage cannot help but embrace the entire practice of women entrepreneurs, thereby explaining how they digitalize their business. When looking at Welter & Gartner, (2016), bricolage fails to consider context in its entirety, focusing more on the entrepreneur. But when considering the EAP theory that essentially analyzes a duality practice/connection, it appears to help better grasp the duality between digitalization and bricolage in this specific context of digital women entrepreneurship. Gartner et al. (2016) have otherwise demonstrated that social practice theory is dedicated to analyzing the links between individuals and their greater environment, which appear essential to understanding in-depth the cases in the coaching industry that were selected for our research here.

We note that bricolage practices can be explained by beliefs and networks. This might help bridge the literature on bricolage and the EAP approach. We also note that this kind of bridge would be at the origin of the concept of bricolage as one kind of practice embedded into networking practices and social beliefs (Levi Strauss, 1966).

**V. Conclusion: Contributions, limitations, and call for future research**
The contribution of our paper relies on three main levels. First, we provide some elements to enhance the literature on digital entrepreneurship by showing that women mostly refer to a familiarity-based bricolage for developing content, adapting the value proposition of their activity to a digitalized context. We also show that their choice of platform for digital systems or tools are based on conventional bricolage. While the literature focuses on how digital users or digital innovators become entrepreneurs (Schiavone et al., 2020), we propose a twist, highlighting how entrepreneurs become digital. Second, we reveal that women who adopt feminine practices achieve feminine results for their venture, while male practices achieve male results. In this respect, and following recent publications (Mahto et al., 2018), we argue that gender plays a key role in the digitalization process of companies. Last, we note that these practices, whether they use bricolage or not, are inspired by social networks and past experience, two constructs that might explain the social beliefs of women entrepreneurs when they go digital.

To conclude, our main contribution is that, by introducing the nuance between familiarity-based bricolage and conventional bricolage, we raise the hypothesis according to which women who mostly adopt a familiarity-based bricolage also adopt other feminine practices and achieve feminine results. Moreover, we initiate a first dialogue between the practice of bricolage and the EAP approach, arguing that the concept of bricolage and the EAP approach propose a twist to improve the entrepreneurial cognition of (women) entrepreneurs, and not only when it comes to creating new businesses (Liguori et al., 2018; Santos et al., 2020).

This study has a number of limitations. First, it relies on three illustrative cases that all evolved within the coaching/mentoring industry. We were only able to raise our hypothesis regarding the gendering of the bricolage practice. This concept will require further investigation. Studying and theorizing from cases that refer to other types of entrepreneurship, tech, or social entrepreneurship will be necessary to help generalize the results we arrived at in this paper. The second limitation is found with the link we were able to make between the stated practices and sources of inspiration. The notion of “network” should be better investigated. We can argue that networks are comprised of many people and, following the emerging work on Bosma et al. (2012), there is a need to identify who precisely in the network inspires women in their practices and why. And regarding the topic of digitalization, our research touched upon relatively poor woman digitalization expertise. It would be interesting to investigate the digitalization process of women entrepreneurs through the prism of entrepreneurial digital competencies (Ngoasong and Zisuh, 2018) that “shape the entry (or start-up) choices and post-entry strategic decisions of digital entrepreneurs in response to context-specific opportunities and challenges associated with digital entrepreneurship” (op. cit., p.1).

We believe this contribution can inspire future research. In the field of digitalization, there is a need to identify how entrepreneurs from other industries digitalize their business. There might also be a need to better explore the role of variables modifying the process by which businesses are digitalized. We argue that, although gender plays a role here, other variables also matter. Following Schiavone et al. (2020), we could imagine that the appetite of entrepreneurs for innovation, especially digital innovation, influences their willingness to foster business digitalization and the process of digitalization per se. Finally, there is a need to better explore the practices of entrepreneurs. What do they really do with institutionalized pressure such as being digital in other contexts?
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