

Woman and IP : Why it matters

Presentation

April 2023



Introduction: a little about me



- Sonal Cheekhooree, lives in Curepipe
- Lived/Worked/Studied in approx. 20 countries
- Sociologist/Social Anthropologist by training; completed MBA in 2019



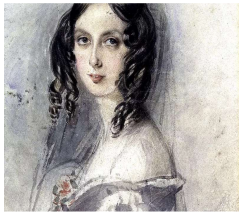
- Started career in market research and later moved into consultancy and strategic insights



- Recently setup own consultancy organization, aimed at supporting SMEs professionalise their offering.
- Coach supporting start-ups and entrepreneurs in devising their growth journey

The Context

- Women are not less innovative or creative than men. Around the world, there are countless examples of women who have proved just that time and again. Let's consider a few of examples here:



Ada Lovelace: Computer Programming
In the mid-1800s, Lovelace wrote the instructions for the first computer program. But mathematician and inventor Charles Babbage was credited with the work.



Chien-Shiung Wu: Nuclear Physics
She developed the process for separating uranium metal. Yet after her discovery, male physicists received credit for her work, winning the Nobel Prize for the experiment in 1957.



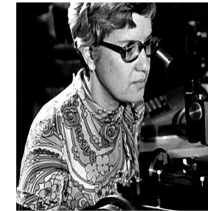
Mary Anderson: Windshield Wipers
Anderson tried selling her device to companies after receiving the patent in 1903, but all of them rejected her invention. It wasn't until the 1950s that companies took to the idea. By then, Anderson's patent had expired, and inventor Robert Kearns was credited.



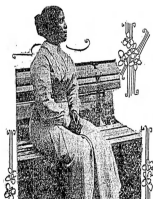
Hedy Lamarr: Wireless Communication
During the 2nd World War, she developed the idea of "frequency hopping," which prevented the bugging of military radios. The U.S. Navy ignored her patent—and later used her findings to develop new wireless technologies, e.g. Wifi and Bluetooth



Katherine Johnson: Moon Landing Path
Johnson discovered the exact path for the Freedom 7 spacecraft to enter space for the first time in 1961 and later for Apollo 11 to land on the moon in 1969. She often went unrecognized by her male colleagues and faced racial discrimination.



Vera Rubin: Dark Matter
Astrophysicist who confirmed the existence of dark matter in the atmosphere. She was never awarded for her work.



Ada Harris: Hair Straightener
Harris first claimed the patent hair straightener it in 1893. Marcel Grateau made his claim to fame with the curling iron around 1852 and her contribution was forgotten.



Elizabeth Magie Phillips: Monopoly
The invention of Monopoly is often credited to Charles Darrow, who sold it to Parker Brothers in 1935. But it was Elizabeth Magie Phillips who came up with the original inspiration, The Landlord's Game, in 1903.

The Context

What do all these women have in common?

- Even though they brought their creativity and innovative thinking to life, these women were often not rewarded for their achievement, or the recognition was attributed to men instead.
- It is therefore crucial to understand what are some of the **factors** that restrict women entrepreneurs, creators and innovators from engaging with IP systems

The Reality

Challenges Contributing to the IP Gender Gap

- Here, I will talk about 5 key factors which contribute to perpetuate the IP Gender Gap. These are:

1.Limited presence of women in STEM fields

- From a young age, girls are less encouraged to explore Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields, which tend to be IP-intensive fields

Lack of encouragement

- Women are less encouraged than men to pursue studies/careers in innovative and creative fields or start their own businesses. Women-led enterprises are often perceived as ‘hobbies’ instead.

Lack of support, resources and opportunities

- Women are less likely to receive the resources (e.g. access to investors) needed to start and succeed in their business ventures, or in innovative and creative fields.

1.Limited representation of women in legal field

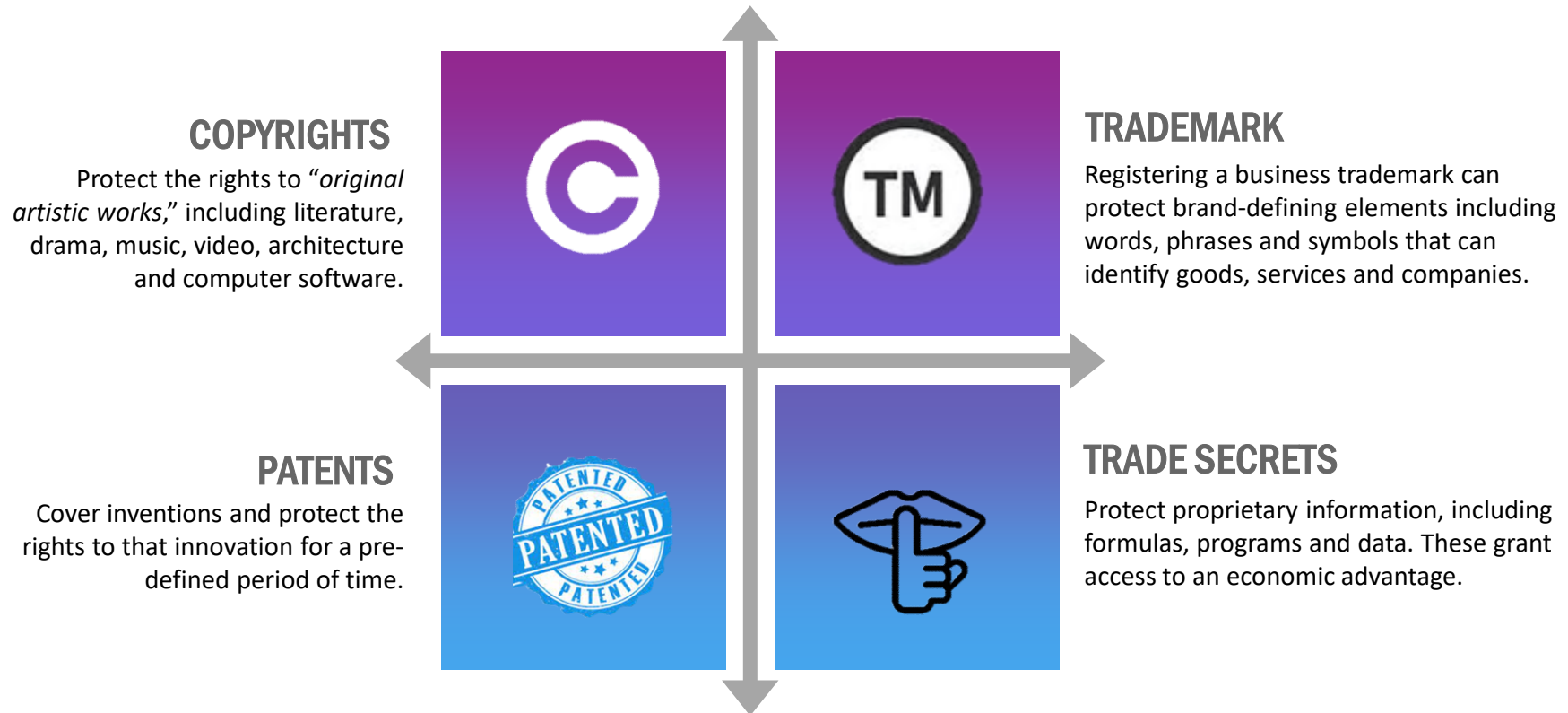
- Women are less likely to enter careers in IP law and administration.

Limited knowledge and information on the benefits of IP Rights

- There is a general lack of understanding among innovators, creators and entrepreneurs of the value of IP rights and how the IP system works.

The IP System

Key components



- Ultimately, developing effective IP protection strategies largely depends on the type of business. An effective strategy may involve a range of IP protection options.

Final thoughts

- Women's presence in the IP system is limited due to a number of factors, including societal, educational and systemic ones. Yet, women entrepreneurs, creators and innovators have much to gain from understanding how the IP system works and adapting their IP strategy to their business needs.
- Devising ways to tackle and correct the Gender Gap in IP protection is important not only to ensure the engagement of half the world's population, but also for the benefit of society at large.
- As women's contributions continue to remain overlooked or undervalued, we are missing out on opportunities to advance science and technology. At businesses level, evidence demonstrates that organisations would improve their financial performance through more gender-diverse teams.
- The lower level of involvement of women in the IP system effectively impacts individuals and national economies as well. Studies estimate that closing just the patenting gender gap could increase GDP by 2.7%*

**Source: Policy Approaches to Close the Intellectual Property Gender Gap - Practices to Support Access to the Intellectual Property System for Female Innovators, Creators and Entrepreneurs*

Thank you!