

Does gender identity play a role in the development of tourism entrepreneurial capabilities?



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Orientation: Previous research conducted on gender roles in business performance has posited that women tend to be less successful, than men, as entrepreneurs.

Research purpose: This study evaluated gender nuances regarding the development of entrepreneurial capabilities within tourism business operations in the Gauteng Province, South Africa.

Motivation for the study: The motivation was to locate any significant gender differences in developing entrepreneurial capabilities and assuring positive business performance.

Research design, approach and method: The study sampled 206 tourism entrepreneurs and used Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Reliability test and Mann-Whitney test to group constructs and compare profile groups and their responses.

Main findings: Results indicated that there are no gender differences in 'traditional societal perceptions', 'entrepreneurial attributes', 'marketing capability', 'people's management and pro-business networking', 'government support' and 'education and business skills', regarding business management or performance. However, gender identity played a role in the construct of 'contra-business networking', where female entrepreneurs agreed more to 'contra-business networking' citing the non-availability of time to attend business network meetings and a lack of awareness of these tourism business networks in their area.

Practical/managerial implication: This study recommended that female tourism entrepreneurs use social media sites such as Facebook to empower and support themselves, to help close social policy gaps in South Africa. This is also applicable in other emerging countries that heavily rely on tourism.

Contribution/value-add: Unlike previous studies, this study argues that gender identity plays no significant role in developing tourism entrepreneurial capabilities for business success.

Keywords: gender and entrepreneurial capabilities; gender and business performance; gender and business operations; gender and entrepreneurial attributes; gender and business networking.

Introduction

Women's entrepreneurship is viewed as a significant issue encompassing social welfare, democracy, gender equality and high-quality family life in addition to economic concerns (Avci & Gümüş 2022). However, compared to industrialised economies, the percentage of women who start their businesses is higher in developing economies, and it is pertinent to identify the conditions that foster the success of high-potential female entrepreneurs, improving economic welfare and strengthening the bonds that bind society's social and economic fabric (Saikumari & Sunitha 2023). The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations regarding 'gender equality' and 'decent growth and economic growth' have recognised women's tourism entrepreneurship as essential to achieving these goals; nevertheless, in the tourism sector, neither entrepreneurship nor sustainability is gender neutral (Figueroa-Domecq et al. 2022a).

Much of the previous research done around gender roles in business performance has posited that women tend to be less successful as entrepreneurs. This is due to several reasons ranging from traditional societal roles and perceptions to the ability to acquire training and obtain financial and legal support (Nzama & Ezeuduji 2020a, 2020b; Tshabalala & Ezeuduji 2016). In a recent work by Swart, Bernauer and Thirumaran (2024), which investigated women's entrepreneurial activities in the hospitality and tourism industry, the authors drew attention to the paucity of comparative research

on the variables that could influence women's entrepreneurial endeavours in the tourism sector, and whether they succeed or fail. This same call was made by Figueroa-Domecq, De Jong and Williams (2020). This may improve our understanding of the differences and similarities between regions and contexts. In the same vein, Nzama and Ezeuduji (2024) called for more studies that will determine factors influencing gender disparities in tourism business performance and confirm if indeed gender identity drives entrepreneurial success or failure. It, therefore, follows that more studies on gender-related business performance, which are more predictive or at least use statistical relationship tests to determine the influence (or moderating role) of gender identity on business operations and performance, done in different world regions and contexts are needed, to provide lessons to be learned using more robust and critical lenses. This current study has contributed to these calls (research gap), by studying the role of gender identity in the development of tourism entrepreneurial capabilities and business success, in the context of South Africa's Gauteng Province.

Indeed, similar gender-based studies have been recently conducted in South Africa and beyond (for example, Afenyo-Agbe et al. 2024, in Ghana; Avci & Gümüş 2022, in Türkiye; Boonabaana 2024, in rural Uganda; Deng & Wang 2023, in China; Fan et al. 2024, in rural China; Nzama & Ezeuduji 2020a, 2020b, 2021, in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa; Pistilli et al. 2023, in the US), however more studies are needed from different regions and contexts. Hence, Gauteng Province in South Africa is chosen as the study area for this current study to compare with the findings obtained in the KwaZulu-Natal Province in South Africa (enabling a more robust national model) and outside South Africa.

The study focused on the gender nuances within tourism business operations (managers and owners) across the Gauteng Province in South Africa to locate if there are noticeable gender differences displayed by these tourism entrepreneurs in running their businesses that may affect business performance. This will enable the researchers to establish if gender identity plays a significant role in the development of tourism entrepreneurial capabilities.

Overview of literature and theoretical lens

In most African nations, gender inequality is the primary cause of women's underachievement in financial independence because of patriarchal cultural norms that have deprived them of social, economic and political rights (Aleshinloye 2023). Through business and empowerment opportunities in the tourism industry, women may support economic growth and national development. The tourism industry has been critiqued for reinforcing gender inequalities, as it employs more women than men compared to the other sectors (Boonabaana 2024). Another study (Ditta-Apichai, Gretzel, & Kattiyapornpong 2023) nonetheless, found that the percentage of female micro-entrepreneurs is

low, even though the tourism and hospitality industries employ a considerable number of women. Female micro-entrepreneurship is crucial to the development of sustainable tourism, however, obstacles to female micro-entrepreneurship persist, especially in developing nations (Ditta-Apichai et al. 2023). There has been a dominant belief that male entrepreneurs perform better than their female counterparts, regardless of the business sector. The following sub-sections will present an overview of relevant theories and the literature regarding research findings and debates on this perceived dominant view, particularly in the tourism sector.

Theoretical underpinnings: Gender differences in entrepreneurship – an organic setup?

This study examined how gender may affect performance in the tourism sector; theoretical frameworks were needed to facilitate the research process. Many relevant theories about the process of entrepreneurship can be found in the literature, including the 'enculturation theory' popularised by Grusec and Hastings (2015), Ho, Tojib and Khajehzadeh's (2017) 'impression management', Baron, Mueller and Wolfe's (2016) 'self-efficacy theory', and Buss (2016) and Rigney's (2011) 'enculturation and trait developments'. These frameworks are relevant to the main subject of the study, which is gender differences in venture success within South Africa's tourism industry.

Regarding gender identity and enculturation theories, humans tend to accept their background and the prevailing beliefs and norms in their group because of ongoing exposure to them (Grusec & Hastings 2015). The authors (Grusec & Hastings) suggest that the processes of enculturation and socialisation result in the development of both cultural differences and similarities in behaviour. As stated by Moudry and Thaichon (2020), explicit cultural aspects are ingrained in a person more quickly and easily as the younger they are. This illustrates how every aspect of society develops into a person's quality.

Though not the only factor, enculturation is thought to play a role in the development of phenotypes, such as gender-specific personality traits, which are arguably prominent in the South African and developing nations' contexts. Most male children are less likely than female children to face hardship in Africa's patriarchal societies (Hofstede Insights 2019). Boys were raised to believe that passing through hardship defines them, especially in the Black South African context. Girls are allowed to cry and show emotions, unlike boys. According to Moudry and Thaichon (2020), this could indicate that men who are successful in business may have a modest advantage over women who do not have masculine traits.

According to Rigney (2011), due to their disparate childhood experiences, boys and girls display distinct adult behaviours, which are mirrored in the ways that each gender runs its own company. As they were brought up to be careful, many young women avoid dangerous situations. It is, therefore, easier for

men to take risks. Risk-taking is one of the fundamental components of entrepreneurship, and female entrepreneurs may take fewer risks than men. According to Moudrý and Thaichon (2020) and Looi and Khoo-Lattimore (2015), enculturation may change over time for children who grew up in homes where parents are entrepreneurs. These researchers found that children from entrepreneurial households are more likely to follow an entrepreneurial career and that up to 83% of them are actively involved in a company. They are, therefore, raised with masculine characteristics by their parents and the people in their immediate vicinity. Enculturation theory discussed here reflects and informs the study constructs of 'traditional societal perceptions', and 'entrepreneurial attributes, education and business skills'.

Self-efficacy is defined by Baron et al. (2016) as believing in one's competence to complete specific activities. Prior studies have shown that a business owner's capacity and capability to accomplish goals and start new initiatives is hampered when they set smaller than necessary goals (Baron et al. 2016). According to Moudrý and Thaichon (2020), this may result in discontent, a reduction in acquiring information, a hindrance to progress, demotivation or even the incapacity to initiate a firm. Drawing from Arévalo Avalos and Flores' (2016) and Baron et al.'s (2016) study, low self-efficacy is associated with some perceived feminine characteristics, such as the non-possessing of a strong competitive spirit. Female entrepreneurs (and arguably entrepreneurs, regardless of gender, who grew up in lower-income group households, with lower-level educational qualifications) may lack the capacity to negotiate self-efficacy, a crucial skill for running a successful business. When starting a new business, having shrewd negotiating and networking skills is crucial for hiring managers and other important staff, managing human resources, securing firm finance and securing more resources. The self-efficacy theory discussed in this paper reflects and informs the study constructs of 'entrepreneurial attributes, education and business skills', 'people's management and marketing capability', 'business networking' and 'government and other external support'.

Impression management, also known as self-presentation, is essential for shaping the perception that other people have of someone (Ho et al. 2017). Entrepreneurs continually utilise impression management tactics to establish, maintain and modify their image to influence the views of others (Nagy et al. 2012). According to Nagy et al. (2012), companies use this capability to support their ability to secure critical business resources and negotiate better business outcomes. Thus, Miller et al. (2003) reported that male entrepreneurs may have a competitive advantage over female entrepreneurs who may be shy, risk-averse and not very resolute, and these are viewed negatively within the domain of impression management because convincing customers to buy one's products and services necessitate the capacity for assertive, even aggressive, interpersonal communication. Some female entrepreneurs are concerned about potential negative

consequences or reactions. According to Moudrý and Thaichon (2020), due to their increased sensitivity to the feelings and sentiments of others, women negotiate more cooperatively. However, male entrepreneurs could persuade others more aggressively, which produces more positive business outcomes – though this is not a bad quality (Guerrero & Richards 2015). Impression management theory highlights more subtly than self-efficacy theory; the study constructs of 'people's management and marketing capability', 'business networking' and 'government and other external support'. The perception that other businesspeople, government or financial institutions have of an entrepreneur's gender and personality may impact business success.

Traditional societal perceptions

According to Boonabaana's (2024) research, patriarchal norms, processes and structures prevalent in developing nations contribute to the gender inequality that still exists in the tourism industry. According to Fan et al. (2024), rural Chinese women's intention to start their businesses is influenced by their sense of gender as a crucial regulatory factor. The findings of Bagheri et al. (2022) further supported the detrimental effects of discrimination based on gender on entrepreneurship and the creation of shared value for Iranian women who run tourism businesses. Masculine traits including aggression, independence, dominance, low need for support and a strong inclination toward taking risks are seen as socially expected of someone wishing to pursue a business career (Tlaiss & Kauser 2019).

Women's entrepreneurial incentives are made up of pull elements (psycho-social expectations) and push factors (economic expectations); and women entrepreneurs are more driven by psycho-social than by economic factors (Avci & Gümüş 2022). Nzama and Ezeuduji's (2024) study was unable to definitively conclude that gender has a major impact on the profitability or performance of businesses. Reality differs from the conventional view of how gender affects entrepreneurial success. The manager's gender is irrelevant in the event of business failure.

Entrepreneurial attributes, education, and business skills

According to Santhi's (2017) study, there are differences in the qualities needed to manage a successful firm. There is a correlation between entrepreneurial behaviour and business performance and a variety of entrepreneurial qualities, including traits, abilities and behaviours (Salisu et al. 2020; Santhi 2017). Kawai and Kazumi (2021) posit that the characteristics that set entrepreneurs apart from businessmen are as follows: (1) cognitive traits of entrepreneurs; (2) resourcefulness; (3) technical expertise; (4) commitment and determination; (5) entrepreneurial tenacity; and (6) endogenous traits of entrepreneurs.

According to Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2020), scholars undervalue different genders' approaches to business operations, as dominant stories of tourism entrepreneurship

portray successful entrepreneurial performance as masculine and economically literate. Women are positioned as 'less than', in need of assistance and training. The authors called on scholars to challenge the literature's inherent economically informed and male bias. One of the main factors impeding the success of female entrepreneurs in African nations has been identified as the lack of education (Nsengimana, Iwu & Tengeh 2017). Women entrepreneurs are said to have generally inferior educational backgrounds than men (Sudarmanti, Van Bauwel & Longman 2013).

Women are more likely to be entrepreneurially inclined when they receive entrepreneurial education, which can close the gender gap in entrepreneurship (Deng & Wang 2023). The study by Butkouskaya, Romagosa and Noguera (2020) found that compared to male students, female students were more aware of the potential barriers to starting a new firm. The reason for a notable disparity in personal hurdles between male and female students was that the former viewed their lack of entrepreneurial knowledge as more significant than the latter.

The findings by Tovmasyan (2022) revealed that women face numerous obstacles while launching a tourism business. They struggle with developing their businesses, innovating, marketing, drawing in tourists, etc. They place a medium-rare value on their skill set, and most of them wish to enhance their business, marketing, communication and analytical and decision-making abilities, among other capabilities. Moreover, Guillet et al. (2019) posit that one of the reasons why women entrepreneurs typically run small, generally unofficial businesses is a lack of technical abilities. According to Nzama and Ezeuduji (2024), training programmes and mentorship for business owners should promote the development of business acumen in entrepreneurs involved in the tourism industry. These programmes should also educate entrepreneurs on business financing and the need to form entrepreneurial networks, with a focus on supporting women in the tourism industry.

Using digital technologies and platforms has empowered women in the tourism industry, but they still face many obstacles and challenges, such as a lack of digital competencies, limited access to digital devices, infrastructure and training, reliance on family and staff for support, and worries about safety, security and work-life balance (Khoo et al. 2023). According to Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2022a), the policy must take into consideration the non-essentialised gendered features that both facilitate and obstruct sustainable tourism business if entrepreneurship is to improve sustainability.

Business networking

In a recent study (Morales-Hernández et al. 2022), there was a correlation between having training and being a member of an association, and there was a strong correlation between receiving public subsidies and being a member of an association, with the correlation being stronger among male tourism promoters. Conversely, women promoters scored

higher on the benefits of networking, especially regarding the ease of booking (Morales-Hernández et al. 2022). The study conducted by Surangi (2022) regarding the networking experiences of female tourism entrepreneurs, noted that female entrepreneurs are more inclined to use informal training procedures and recruitment strategies within their business networks. Although they prioritise clients outside of the neighbourhood, they maintain close contact with the local community.

Business networking must not always be physical, it can also be virtual or hybrid-based. According to Ditta-Apichai et al. (2023), social media sites such as Facebook have the potential to empower female micro-entrepreneurs in the tourism and hospitality industries and close social policy gaps in emerging countries that heavily rely on tourism. The authors highlight four ways in which Facebook facilitates individual and group empowerment processes and outcomes: (1) as a learning resource; (2) as an informal entrepreneurial ecosystem; (3) as a tool for self-improvement; and (4) as a platform for business development interaction. According to Nzama and Ezeuduji (2024), business networking is very important for mutual support among female entrepreneurs.

People's management and marketing capability

Guillet et al. (2019) claim that female managers value their teams highly and invest in them by teaching, empowering and guiding their members. Male managers, on the other hand, come across as arrogant instead of being courteous and receptive to hearing. Researchers (Schaap, Stedham & Yamamura 2008) claim that female entrepreneurs push for training for their staff members so they may better comprehend how to execute and achieve performance targets. Men, conversely, tend to utilise positional power and more domination. Consequently, it appears that women guide, empathise with and support the development of those beneath them to exercise leadership. When it comes to interpersonal abilities, male and female entrepreneurs appear to use different management strategies. According to previous research (Sudarmanti et al. 2013), male entrepreneurs are more forceful in persuading subordinates, different from women entrepreneurs.

Manzanera-Román and Brändle (2016) posit that women are more adept at social and interpersonal interactions and exhibit traits like tenacity. According to the study by Guillet et al. (2019), there is a perception that women entrepreneurs possess greater empathy and sensitivity when it comes to understanding others, including consumers, subordinates and counterparts. According to Sudarmanti et al. (2013), female entrepreneurs are more likely to operate in micro-companies due to their relative lack of experience, abilities and managerial knowledge when compared to male entrepreneurs.

One of the main factors influencing a business's performance is its ability to reach out to potential

customers. Yadav (2018) reported that effective marketing has a greater role in a destination's ability to attract more tourists. Tshabalala and Ezeuduji (2016) point out that women-owned tourism enterprises have a weak marketing strategy. Additionally, the research findings indicate that several female entrepreneurs struggle to attract clients due to a lack of appropriate connections within the tourism sector. Despite the perception that women are especially skilled with social media, they have not used technology as much as men have (Orser & Riding 2018). Conversely, women are less likely to take advantage of company growth chances by applying their social media expertise (Orser & Riding 2018). The survey also finds that, in comparison to men, women are less confident in their technological aptitude. However, a recent study conducted by Nzama and Ezeuduji (2024) noted that there is no definite finding that gender identity influences business capability or success. It was rather discovered that marketing and business management skills have a significant impact on company success.

Government and other external support

The study by Swart et al. (2024) underlined the importance of government support to women's entrepreneurial intentions and aspirations, especially regarding educational and training intervention, the provision of securities to obtain business financing and legal support. In the same vein, non-government assistance from the private sector should include education and training, family, financial and socioeconomic support (Swart et al. 2024). The study done in Spain by Butkouskaya et al. (2020) regarding tourism students' intention to start businesses after graduation, stated that compared to male students, female students typically need greater financial and practical support.

According to Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2022b), women are not only underrepresented in the funding system as applicants, but they also have lower success rates. This can be partially explained by the fact that women apply using business models that are less effective given the prevalence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and technologically driven advances. However, the obstacles go beyond these typologies; women still face a double gender difference in performance even after accounting for important success indicators like project size that emphasise the need for a gender lens policy approach. Research showed that a female entrepreneur is less likely to get outside finance if she has had a previous failure. However, the detrimental impact lessens when creative or consistently prosperous entrepreneurs are taken into account (Pistilli et al. 2023). Therefore, Pistilli et al. hypothesise that new or serially successful entrepreneurs should encounter less gender prejudice than their colleagues who have failed in their entrepreneurial endeavours (Pistilli et al. 2023). However, Nzama and Ezeuduji's (2024) South African study demonstrated that female entrepreneurs find it simpler to secure starting capital.

Design and methods

Design, sampling, and data collection

The study utilised the quantitative approach with a survey research design to attract a considerable sample size. The quantitative approach was chosen for this study, as the study aims to measure gender differences regarding the development of entrepreneurial capabilities within tourism business operations. These differences can be unearthed using standard questionnaire variables that can be tested using inferential statistical analysis, which is more objective than the qualitative methods (see Veal 2011). The criteria of inclusion for data collection were that the tourism business be an enterprise that falls into the travel sector (transport and travel organisers), hospitality sector (accommodation and events), leisure and business sector, sports and recreation sector, gaming, and tourism support service sector. Thus, entrepreneurs were targeted across popular tourist areas across Gauteng. The researchers targeted Meetings Africa Conference 2023 which exhibited and hosted various tourism companies including accommodation facilities, tour operators, travel agents, car hire and aviation companies. This exhibition was hosted at the Sandton Convention Centre, Gauteng's central and major economic hub. Only entrepreneurs attending Meetings Africa from the Gauteng Province were surveyed. This was verified before the questionnaire was handed out to the respondents. Data collection was also done in Soweto targeting their Bungee jumping facilities, Soweto Back Packers and various restaurants and pop-ups in Vilakazi Street. The researchers equally collected data in Johannesburg city within Kwa Mai Mai Market and Maboneng Precinct, various restaurants in the popular Melville area and business hot spots (areas with much business presence, sales activity and customer engagement) in Sandton City and Nelson Mandela Square. The non-probability sampling method – convenience sampling was employed to allow for a strong response rate, based on the willingness of the owner or manager on duty at these tourism business operations to respond to the study. Convenience sampling has potential research bias, in terms of the non-generalisability of the research findings due to the perceived non-representativeness of the study population, in this case, tourism entrepreneurs in Gauteng, South Africa. This was mitigated by using a relatively large sample size, controlling the sample's representativeness by balancing the gender populations (males and females) and adding diversity to the sample in terms of the respondents' nationality, age group and sampling locations within the province. A total of 220 business operations participated in this study; however, 206 questionnaires were used for data analysis due to completeness. Only tourism business operators aged 18 or above were surveyed for ethical reasons. The study included business managers who supported business owners from the conception to the running of the businesses, as part of the study respondents, as they can also be argued to be entrepreneurial. These managers make much of the business operational decisions, and in most cases, are involved in strategic decisions, based on the trust relationship they have

with the business owners, hence their inclusion in assessing entrepreneurial capabilities. These were verified before the questionnaire was handed out to the respondents who are business managers, but not business owners.

The study mitigated response bias by including neutrally worded questions in the questionnaire, allowing respondents to complete the questionnaire without any intervention, ensuring anonymity of responses and not introducing any university logo in the questionnaire. The researchers improved the replicability of this study by presenting a clear methodology section in their paper, outlining the procedures, and assumptions, and introducing appropriate control variables. Data analysis used standard protocols and reporting.

Based on the literature reviewed, the theoretical study constructs introduced in the questionnaire were 'traditional societal perception', 'formal education and training', 'managerial and operational capabilities', 'marketing capability', 'access to financial capital', 'government support', 'business networks' and 'entrepreneurial attributes'. Questionnaire variables emanate from earlier studies that measured the study constructs (Bagheri et al. 2022; Deng & Wang 2023; Figueroa-Domecq et al. 2022b; Manzanera-Román & Brändle 2016; Morales-Hernández et al. 2022; Tlaiss & Kauser 2019; Tovmasyan 2022; Salisu et al. 2020; Santhi 2017). The questionnaire items that collected data on the profile of the respondents were categorical or nominal; however, the items that enquired into the study constructs were ordinal along a five-point Likert scale. The study included other socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (apart from gender) in the questionnaire (such as nationality, age group, owner/manager, business motivation, years of experience, etc.) as 'control variables', to further check if these variables may explain differences in the development of tourism entrepreneurial capabilities, in case gender did not explain them. This can form the basis for further studies and more robust discussions.

Ethical considerations

This study received ethical approval from the University of Zululand (South Africa) Research Ethics Committee on 29 June 2020. The ethical clearance number is UZREC 171110-030. The study used signed participants' informed consent to obtain data from respondents. Data were collected anonymously, with no form of personal identification on the questionnaire.

Data analysis

The collected data were directly captured into IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29 for analysis. The first stage of data analyses performed frequency analyses on the profile variables. For the second stage, the principal axis factoring (PAF) extraction method was used to carry out the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the 42 items measuring gender-nuanced perceptions in tourism business operations and management (Warner 2013). This was followed by an orthogonal varimax rotation that generated a clear-cut factor

structure. Cronbach's alphas were calculated to measure the reliability of the factors, following the calculation of means and standard deviations on the factor scores. As both the group sizes and the sample size exceeded 50, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to check for normality (Razali & Wah 2011). Thereafter, a Mann-Whitney test (non-parametric test) was run to see if there were relationships between gender-nuanced views and different profile groups.

Results and discussion

In Table 1, the profiles of the respondents are presented, which consist of their socio-demographic characteristics, business profile and their perceptions regarding their business success level. Most of the respondents have tertiary education which is desirable for running a tourism business. It is, therefore, not surprising that about 90% of the respondents classified themselves as successful or very successful. Gender representation results in Table 1 dispute the finding of Ditta-Apichai et al. (2023) that the percentage of female entrepreneurs is low. For this study, both genders are well-represented, even though men have a slight edge (51%) over women (49%).

Exploratory factor analysis and reliability test

An EFA was performed on all 42 items measuring gender-nuanced perceptions in tourism business operations and

TABLE 1: Respondents' profile ($N = 206$).

Variable	Category	%
Gender	Male	51.0
	Female	49.0
South African	Yes	61.2
	No	38.8
Age group	Younger than 40 years	50.0
	40 years or older	50.0
Owner of the business?	Yes	44.2
	No	55.8
Manager of the business?	Yes	82.0
	No	18.0
Motivation to start a tourism business	Business opportunity	75.7
	Survival	24.3
Number of years in business	Less than 10 years	55.3
	10 years or more	44.7
Highest level of education	Secondary	27.2
	Tertiary	72.8
Type of business	Accommodation	18.0
	Food and beverage	16.0
	Events management	9.7
	Tour operation	10.2
	Travel agency	11.7
	Tour guide	11.7
	Car rentals	4.9
	Resorts	2.4
	Consultancy	5.3
	Others (Art, Souvenir, Photography, Government)	10.2
Business success classification	Very successful	55.8
	Successful	34.5
	Surviving	7.7
	Struggling	1.5
	Unsuccessful	0.5

management to identify any latent constructs of newly created measures. The items used for the measurement were initially checked for factorability. Eleven items were thereafter omitted for non-appropriateness during the EFA, based on their communality values of < 0.3 (Pallant 2007). Hence, for the final EFA analysis on the remaining 31 items, a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy of 0.837 was obtained, above the cut-off value of 0.6 (Tabachnick & Fidell 2014), with a significant p -value for the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity $\chi^2 (df) = 5039.497$, $p < 0.001$. The communalities at extraction were all > 0.4 , higher than the 0.3 cut-off score. Following Kaiser's criterion, the EFA generated seven factors, which explained

63.06% of the variance after rotation. For this study, the seven factors generated were labelled: 'entrepreneurial attributes' (exhibited most of the variance at 34.24%); 'marketing capability' (accounts for 10.45% of the variance); 'traditional societal perceptions' (7.15% of variance); 'people's management and pro-business networking' (6.61% of variance); 'government support' (5.34% of variance); 'contra-business networking' (4.06% of variance); and 'education and business skills' (3.25% of variance). The 'pro-business networking' labels used here reflect 'positive' responses on business networking, while the 'contra-business networking' labels reflect 'negative' responses on business networking. These seven empirical

TABLE 2: Exploratory factor analysis† and reliability tests.

Item statement	Loading of item	Name of factor	Cronbach's alpha	% variance explained	Mean	SD
Factor 1						
'I have been a powerful force for helpful change'	0.850	Entrepreneurial attributes	0.91	34.24	2.01	0.41
'I am ambitious to bring change in my society'	0.810					
'I always bring new ideas into the business'	0.780					
'I enjoy facing and overcoming obstacles to my ideas'	0.760					
'I can spot a good opportunity easily'	0.700					
'I am great at turning problems into opportunities'	0.640					
'I do not give up easily'	0.590					
Factor 2						
'I use the Internet to market my business'	0.810	Marketing capability	0.92	10.45	1.84	0.48
'I rely on different sources of media to get my business known'	0.810					
'I know very well how to offer my products/services to meet customer needs (Product)'	0.800					
'I use different promotion techniques to sell my products/services (Promotion)'	0.710					
'I research to find out the new market trends'	0.580					
Factor 3						
'The gender of the business manager influences the level of service(s) delivered to customers'	0.910	Traditional societal perceptions	0.85	7.15	1.68	0.42
'International tourists patronise mostly white businesses'	0.800					
'The performance of the business is influenced by the belief systems of the society'	0.720					
'Male business managers perform better than female business managers'	0.650					
'Male business owners are better trained than female business owners'	0.420					
Factor 4						
'I send or arrange workshops for the staff members to receive training'	0.630	People's management and pro-business networking	0.77	6.61	2.40	0.63
'I allow my employees to come up with ideas or decisions in running the business'	0.620					
'I am aware of the available sources of capital that cater to tourism businesses'	0.560					
'I can meet with other business owners at social gatherings'	0.470					
'I am an active member of a tourism business network (union)'	0.470					
Factor 5						
'Male business owners or managers have better access to business capital than female business owners or managers'	0.632	Government support	0.70	5.34	1.88	0.39
'The government does not support tourism businesses'	0.620					
'I received start-up capital from the government'	0.410					
'It is easy to find start-up capital to start a tourism business'	0.380					
Factor 6						
'There is no time for attending business network meetings'	0.720	Contra-business networking	0.81	4.06	1.95	0.51
'There are no tourism business networks in my area'	0.660					
Factor 7						
'I believe that formal education has contributed to strengthening and developing my leadership skills'	0.580	Education and business skills	0.82	3.25	1.93	0.42
'I can run a successful tourism business with my knowledge'	0.510					
'I have skills and experience in running a tourism business'	0.460					

SD, standard deviation.

†, Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation; Rotation converged in nine iterations.

factors were found to be reliable (see Table 2) having Cronbach's alpha values > 0.70 , depicting good to excellent internal consistencies among the items in the scale (George & Mallery 2003).

Table 2 shows the summary of the EFA and reliability tests' results. The mean scores and standard deviations are also presented for each of the seven factors. At the beginning of the analyses, certain items needed to be reverse scored, as they correlated negatively with the other items due to how the wording of these statements was done in the questionnaire. Originally, all items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree and 5 = strongly disagree. However, Factor 3, Factor 5, and Factor 6 consisted of reverse-scored items only, where the scale changed to 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree; meaning that the higher the mean scores, the higher the level of agreement. For Factor 1, Factor 2, Factor 4, and Factor 7 the original scale interpretation was used, as those items are not reverse-scored; therefore, 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. So, the higher the mean score, the higher the level of disagreement. Therefore the respondents are positive regarding: 'entrepreneurial attributes'; 'marketing capability'; and 'education and business skills'; The respondents are somewhat neutral towards: 'people's management and pro-business networking'; and negative regarding about 'traditional societal perceptions'; 'government support' and 'contra-business networking'.

Comparing profile groups and their responses

The links between the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and business factors were explored in this study. Therefore, for data analyses, the profile groups were collapsed, where it is necessary to be able to make

comparisons for larger and similar group sizes. The normality tests done proved that all the factor scores for the various groups were not normally distributed (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, all $p < 0.001$), and some variables were very skewed; hence, the researchers used a non-parametric test (Mann-Whitney test) for all the comparisons done (Pallant 2007) between the profile groups on the seven factors. This article, however, discusses only the significant results (see Table 3).

Regarding the focus of this study, the respondents did not hold firm to the traditional societal perceptions towards gender and/or racial differences in business management or performance. They disagreed with those sentiments. These findings agree with those of Nzama and Ezeuduji (2024), which was conducted in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa, that gender identity has no identifiable impact on the profitability or performance of businesses. The manager's gender is irrelevant in the event of business failure. The findings, therefore, disagree with the propositions made by Boonabaana (2024) regarding ongoing disparities in gender found within the tourism sector, exacerbated by dominant developing countries' patriarchal norms, systems and structures. Also, the discrimination based on gender in entrepreneurship posited by Bagheri et al. (2022) cannot be traced by this study.

Government support remains a huge challenge for these entrepreneurs, regardless of gender identity. Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2022b) and Swart et al. (2024) called for government support for women's entrepreneurial intentions and aspirations, especially regarding educational and training intervention, the provision of securities to obtain business financing and legal support. However, an earlier study by Nzama and Ezeuduji (2024), in another province of South Africa (KwaZulu-Natal), proved that female entrepreneurs

TABLE 3: Comparison results with Mann-Whitney test.

Variable	Factors and/or constructs	Group	N	Mean	SD	Mann-Whitney test			
						Mean rank	Mann-Whitney U	Z	p
Gender	Contra-business networking	Male	105	1.85	0.55	93.43	4245.00	-3.43	0.001
		Female	101	2.06	0.44	113.97			
South African	Entrepreneurial attributes	Yes	126	2.05	0.39	110.98	4097.50	-2.48	0.013
		No	80	1.93	0.42	91.72			
	Traditional societal perceptions	Yes	126	1.73	0.41	109.78	4248.50	-2.02	0.043
		No	80	1.61	0.42	93.61			
	Contra-business networking	Yes	126	2.06	0.49	112.40	3919.00	-3.73	0.000
		No	80	1.79	0.49	89.49			
Age (years)	Education and business skills	< 40	103	2.00	0.44	113.01	4325.00	-2.73	0.006
		40 +	103	1.87	0.39	93.99			
Owner of business	People's management and pro-business networking	Yes	91	2.59	0.73	120.95	3645.00	-3.77	0.000
		No	115	2.25	0.48	89.70			
Number of years in business	People's management and pro-business networking	< 10 years	114	2.50	0.63	114.32	4011.00	-2.93	0.003
		10 years +	92	2.27	0.60	90.10			
	Contra-business networking	< 10 years	114	2.06	0.50	112.00	4274.50	-3.16	0.002
		10 years +	92	1.83	0.49	92.96			
Business success	People's management and pro-business networking	Very successful	115	2.25	0.50	85.12	3119.00	-2.73	0.006
		Successful	71	2.48	0.74	107.07			
	Government support	Very successful	115	1.84	0.42	87.65	3409.50	-2.11	0.034
		Successful	71	1.90	0.34	102.98			

SD, standard deviation.

have an easier time finding start-up funding. This is consistent with the findings of this study.

Other issues with no significant positive scores and not specific to any gender that need to be highlighted are people's management and pro-business networking, which require upskilling through training and development. These are significant capabilities needed for running successful tourism businesses. Scholars (such as Guillet et al. 2019; Schaap et al. 2008; Sudarmanti et al. 2013) emphasised people's management differences between male and female managers, as described in the literature review section. However, this study did not reveal any gender differences in people's management, which also aligns with the findings of Nzama and Ezeuduji (2024), in another province of South Africa.

Regarding business networking, scholars (such as Morales-Hernández et al. 2022; Surangi 2022) discussed gender differences regarding business networking. Morales-Hernández et al. (2022) reported that women promoters scored higher on the benefits of networking, especially regarding the ease of booking. Surangi (2022) noted that female entrepreneurs are more inclined to use informal training procedures and recruitment strategies, within their business networks. The results of this study also reveal significant gender differences in terms of business networking, where female respondents agreed more than male respondents to 'contra-business networking' (statement items: there is no time for attending business network meetings; and there are no tourism business networks in my area) (Table 3). Due to the busy schedule of women entrepreneurs regarding managing both business and family, this result is not surprising. This will be addressed later in the conclusions and recommendations section.

It is, however, good news that the respondents, regardless of gender, perceive themselves as having the required entrepreneurial attributes, marketing capability, education and business skills required to run successful tourism businesses. Kawai and Kazumi (2021) highlighted the characteristics that set entrepreneurs apart from others as follows: (1) cognitive traits of entrepreneurs; (2) resourcefulness; (3) technical expertise; (4) commitment and determination; (5) entrepreneurial tenacity; and (6) endogenous traits of entrepreneurs. Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2020) posit that scholars undervalue different genders' approaches to business operations, as dominant stories of tourism entrepreneurship portray successful entrepreneurial performance as masculine and economically literate. It was reported in the literature that one of the main factors impeding the success of female entrepreneurs in African nations has been identified as the lack of education (Nsengimana et al. 2017). Women entrepreneurs are said to have generally inferior educational backgrounds than men (Sudarmanti et al. 2013). Women-owned tourism businesses, according to Tshabalala and Ezeuduji (2016), have a poor marketing plan. Also, Orser and Riding (2018) underlined

that although women are perceived to be especially skilled with social media, they are less likely to take advantage of company growth chances by applying their social media expertise. However, this study did not identify any statistical differences between genders in terms of entrepreneurial attributes, marketing capability, education and business skills required to run successful tourism businesses. This is consistent with the findings of Nzama and Ezeuduji (2024).

From these study results, the gender identity and enculturation theories (Grusec & Hastings 2015) discussed earlier do not hold strongly for this study. The diverse behaviours that boys and girls exhibit from an early age do not eventually affect how they manage their enterprises as adults. No gender in this study was markedly found to have higher self-efficacy than the other (see Arévalo Avalos & Flores 2016; Baron et al. 2016). Self-efficacy did not noticeably vary across genders, except in the area of business networking, where women entrepreneurs are only disadvantaged due to their heavy workload of managing both families and businesses. The study's findings thus contradict the claims made by earlier writers (Guerrero & Richards 2015; Stark & Zawojcka 2015) that female business owners who possess feminine traits typically face less of a competitive disadvantage than their male counterparts. The results also did not give evidence of any impression management discrepancy between male and female entrepreneurs, as asserted by previous authors (Guerrero & Richards 2015; Moudry & Thaichon 2020), in terms of presenting themselves and persuading others (evident in management and marketing capabilities, where gender, in this study, did not play any role regarding these, in the perception of business success).

This study identified (Table 3) certain socio-demographic and profile differences (other than gender) in business operations and success:

- Non-South African tourism entrepreneurs agree more than their South African counterparts on the study construct – 'entrepreneurial attributes'. This means that non-South African entrepreneurs evaluate themselves as more entrepreneurial.
- South African tourism entrepreneurs agree more than their non-South African counterparts on the study constructs – 'traditional societal perceptions' and 'contra-business networking'. This implies that South African tourism entrepreneurs are more devoid of traditional societal perceptions but less active in business networking.
- Tourism entrepreneurs in the age group 40 years or older agree more than their younger counterparts on the study construct – 'education and business skills'. This means that the older entrepreneurs believe they have more education and business skills than the younger ones.
- Business managers who run the tourism business (but who do not own the business) agree more than the business owners who do not run the tourism business, on the study construct – 'people's management and pro-

business networking'. Business managers perceive themselves to have better human resources management and business networking ability, than business owners who do not manage their businesses.

- Tourism entrepreneurs who have been in the business for 10 years and above agree more than those who have spent less than 10 years in business, on the study construct – 'people's management and pro-business networking'. Therefore, those who have spent less than 10 years in business agree more than those who have been in the business for 10 years and above, on the study construct – 'contra-business networking'. This implies that with longer years of experience, it is likely that tourism entrepreneurs become better people managers and more active in business networking.
- Tourism entrepreneurs who deem themselves 'very successful' agree more than those who deem themselves as 'successful', on the study construct – 'people's management and pro-business networking', while in contrast, those who deem themselves as 'successful' agree more than those who see themselves as 'very successful', on the study construct 'government support'. This means that people's management and business networking abilities have a positive influence on business success. However, deriving government support does not necessarily mean that the entrepreneur involved will be more successful than those who have less access to government support.

These results highlighted above are not the focus of this study; hence they cannot be further discussed. Future studies can further explore these findings.

Conclusions and recommendations

This study explored gender nuances within tourism business operations across the Gauteng Province in South Africa to locate any significant impact that gender differences may have on entrepreneurial capabilities and business performance. Results indicated that there are no gender differences in 'traditional societal perceptions', 'entrepreneurial attributes', 'marketing capability', 'people's management and pro-business networking', 'government support' and 'education and business skills', regarding business management or performance. However, gender identity played a role in the construct of 'contra-business networking', where female entrepreneurs agreed more to 'contra-business networking' citing the non-availability of time to attend business network meetings and a lack of awareness of these tourism business networks in their area. This study posits that although there are no gender differences regarding 'pro-business networking', these results are likely due to the busy schedule of women entrepreneurs in managing both businesses and families.

To support women entrepreneurs, this study recommends that business networking must not always be physical; it can

also be virtual- or hybrid-based. This will enhance flexibility for time. Social media sites such as Facebook have the potential to empower female entrepreneurs in the tourism and hospitality sector and close social policy gaps in emerging countries that heavily rely on tourism. Women can create their business network groups on social media or join mixed groups. As Ditta-Apichai et al. (2023) emphasised, social media, such as Facebook facilitates individual and group empowerment processes and outcomes: (1) as a learning resource; (2) as an informal entrepreneurial ecosystem; (3) as a tool for self-improvement and (4) as a platform for business development interaction. Nzama and Ezeudji (2024) assert that business networking is very important for mutual support among female entrepreneurs. Improving the digital literacy of women entrepreneurs will help to reduce the digital skills gap and promote increased digital networking of female entrepreneurs. Hence, targeted interventions such as affordable digital training, financial assistance and community-based solutions can help to improve digital inclusion and the empowerment of women tourism entrepreneurs.

Government support, regardless of gender, is needed to support entrepreneurial intentions and aspirations, especially regarding educational and training intervention on people's management, business networking, the provision of securities to obtain business financing and legal support. Entrepreneurs in South Africa constantly require upskilling through training and development on new tourism trends and how they can position themselves to target changing markets and conditions. These are significant dynamic capabilities needed for running successful tourism businesses in an ever-changing industry. The private sector, where need be, can also lend helping hands to government interventions.

Limitations of study and future research

The non-probability sampling method – convenience sampling, employed by this study allowed for a strong response rate, based on the willingness of the owner or manager on duty at these tourism business operations to respond to the study. However, non-probability sampling may be argued to be non-representative of the study population and may not represent the broader population of tourism entrepreneurs in South Africa. It is, however, difficult to implement a probability sampling method to collect data for a study such as this, as the study captures the views of entrepreneurs in both the formal and informal sectors. For the latter, the actual population cannot be established because they are not registered, making probability sampling not possible for this study.

While the focus on female entrepreneurship may be commendable, the study underexplored male perspectives and challenges, limiting its ability to provide a balanced view of gender dynamics. Additionally, the research, based on its regional scope, did not thoroughly explore contextual variations and intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity

or socioeconomic status, which are particularly relevant in the South African context. These are issues that future studies may tackle. Future research may adopt mixed methods approaches, address intersectionality and expand the regional and contextual scope to build a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in tourism entrepreneurship. The inclusion of a qualitative slant to this quantitative study could have added more depth to the gender-related findings.

Future studies can also be more conclusive and use larger sample sizes to model the moderating roles of gender identity in influencing business operations and performance in other provinces of South Africa and beyond. This will confirm or disconfirm the findings of this study in similar or different contexts.

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Authors' contributions

I.O.E. was responsible for the conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, and the writing of the original draft, visualisation, project administration, software, validation, data curation, resources, writing final article and supervision.

A.D. contributed to the conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing original draft, data curation, resources and the writing of the final article.

N.N. contributed to the conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing original draft, data curation and the writing of the final article.

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Data availability

This study used primary data collected by the researchers. Data collected will be stored for 5 years on authors' computers, after which the data will be destroyed. Data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, I.O.E., upon request.

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