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### Key Drivers of Success of Frontline Women Entrepreneurs: Evidence from Travel Agencies in Suez Canal and Sinai Region

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#### Abstract

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Given that recent empirical studies have ignored the pivotal role of women entrepreneurs in the tourism industry, an in-depth investigation of how these entrepreneurs succeed in this vital industry may be on the research agenda. As a result, this paper seeks to examine how women entrepreneurs in frontline travel agencies are successful through government policies, community engagement, and education/skill development as key drivers for achieving this success. Using an online survey prepared via the Microsoft Form platform, 396 women supervisors working in the front-office department within 38 travel agencies located in Suez Canal and Sinai region responded. Data were coded using SPSS v.28 and analyzed using SmartPLS v.4. Findings revealed that government policies and education/skill development positively affected community engagement and success of women entrepreneurs. Besides, community engagement positively affected the success of women entrepreneurs at these agencies. Furthermore, community engagement partially mediated the indirect associations between the success of frontline women entrepreneurs and both government policies and education/skill development. This paper is the first empirical study of women entrepreneurship within travel agencies in Egypt due to their vital role in community participation and the enhancement of strategic management practices within these agencies.

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, the phenomenon of women entrepreneurship has garnered global attention (Hughes and Jennings, 2020), with women entrepreneurs emerging as significant contributors to economic growth and social progress (Na et al., 2022). These individuals harness their skills, knowledge, and resources to establish new businesses, demonstrating innovation and initiative akin to their male counterparts (Gërguri-Rashiti & Rotabi, 2021). This aligns with Sun et al. (2022)'s results, emphasizing their role as instrumental agents of economic and social advancement. The contributions of women entrepreneurs span diverse sectors, encompassing poverty alleviation, education, and human development, particularly in less industrialized nations (Ranabahu & Tanima, 2022).

Women entrepreneurship is integral to sustainable economic development, with its importance gaining recognition as one of the key drivers of sustainable growth and essential for enhancing the well-being and prosperity of emerging economies (Bagheri et al., 2022). Numerous studies highlight the underutilized role of women entrepreneurs as catalysts for sustainable economic development (Hammami et al., 2022). Their contributions underscore the significance of empowering and supporting women entrepreneurs for enduring economic progress.

Within tourism entrepreneurial landscapes, the tourism sector has emerged as an attractive and dynamic domain. However, women entrepreneurs in this sector face underexplored challenges (Pritchard, 2014; Makandwa, 2021). The relationship between gender and tourism remains understudied, despite the pressing need to address gender-related perspectives within the tourism sector (Morgan & Pritchard, 2019). Notably, significant gender disparities persist in entrepreneurial activities worldwide (McCall & Mearns, 2021). Policies aimed at fostering entrepreneurship are essential. Such policies create a supportive environment, eliminate barriers, and provide assistance for business development.

Many countries have implemented measures to support women-led enterprises, striving to advance gender equality and sustainable development (Ghosh, 2022). Nevertheless, female entrepreneurs face obstacles such as social attitudes, cultural constraints, and limited access to funding and essential skills (Ghouse et al., 2021). Comprehensive research by Vukovic et al. (2021) explores factors influencing female entrepreneurship, emphasizing the role of government policies in addressing gender disparities within the tourism sector.

Roy and Mukhopadhyay (2019) highlight the need for policies that create a conducive environment for women entrepreneurship and skill enhancement programs tailored to promote women-led businesses. As such, these studies provide valuable insights into the complex landscape of female entrepreneurship and the critical role of supportive policies and factors in its success. In Egypt, women entrepreneurship features prominently in development plans and gender-related policies, aiming to enhance economic participation and income. However, a dedicated national framework for women entrepreneurship development is lacking. Women entrepreneurs in Egypt encounter various challenges, including balancing business and family, limited access to financial and non-financial services, and underrepresentation in policy dialogues (Khayal, 2021).

This research investigates the key drivers of success for women entrepreneurs in the context of travel agencies, shedding light on the factors that facilitate their sustainable growth. By exploring the unique challenges and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs in the tourism and hospitality sector, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of their role as catalysts for economic progress and gender equality. Our findings have policy implications, with a focus on creating a supportive environment for women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector in Egypt.

## **2. Theory and hypotheses**

### *2.1. Success of women entrepreneurs*

Entrepreneurship defines as the process of recognizing and seizing opportunities to create value, be it economic, cultural, or social (Santa-Maria et al., 2022). Entrepreneurs, often business owners, drive economic activity by identifying and capitalizing on new opportunities. Recent studies suggest that women's entrepreneurial profiles are shaped by perceptions and stereotypes rather than inherent differences in abilities. These perceptions, varying confidence levels, and preferences influence women's engagement in entrepreneurship (Pelegrini & Moraes, 2022). Factors like reduced confidence in their abilities and limited external support impact women's entrepreneurial self-efficacy, potentially limiting the number of women entrepreneurs (Corrêa et al., 2022).

The impact of gender discrimination on female managerial leadership and self-management skills warrants further investigation (Visser & van Scheers, 2018). Self-leadership, where individuals take charge of and motivate themselves, emerges as a crucial factor influencing entrepreneurs' success (Ahmad et al., 2022). Entrepreneurial success includes outcomes like organizational growth, capital accumulation, sustainability, revenue growth, and overall viability (Cetin et al., 2022). For women tourism entrepreneurs, success often means achieving economic independence (Sobaih et al., 2021), generating income to support their families, and creating something of value (Tajeddini et al., 2017). Initially, they often prioritized economic aspects. Success can be measured through performance, income levels, profitability, creativity, and essential skills (Halim,2018).

### *2.2. Key drivers of success of women entrepreneurs*

#### *2.2.1. Government policies*

Women's entrepreneurial intentions can be significantly affected by various obstacles, including a lack of support, perceived incompetence, and fear of failure (Cacciotti and Hayton,2015). Bendell et al. (2019) indicated that male entrepreneurs tend to be more effective in achieving their goals when implementing organizational strategies. This suggests that women may face unique challenges impacting their motivation and success.

Government support plays a pivotal role in ensuring the success of women entrepreneurs, as highlighted by Hu et al. (2022). Business support programs, such as accelerators and mentorship initiatives, are instrumental in mitigating concerns about business closure due to a lack of experience (Westhead and Wright ,2013). These programs assist in assessing strengths, weaknesses, and external threats and opportunities in both internal and external business environments. Furthermore, they serve as guides, aiming to extend the benefits of small and

medium-sized enterprises to the broader community by facilitating the development of differentiation strategies that enhance SME sustainability (Delecourt ,2020).

Governments are increasingly establishing chambers of commerce for women to provide essential facilities and support for women entrepreneurs (Rehman et al., 2022). These initiatives offer comprehensive assistance to women entrepreneurs, facilitating a seamless transition into operational status and meaningful economic contributions. It is essential for various government departments to coordinate their efforts to provide additional support during the startup phase, as recommended by Chhabra et al. (2022).

In Egypt, several laws and regulations have been enacted to promote gender equality and facilitate women's participation in the workforce. Despite these legislative efforts, women's participation in both the labor force and employment remains relatively low. Egypt's strategic plans, including Vision 2030 and the Small and Medium Enterprise Strategy, prioritize the advancement of women's employment and SMEs development (ILO, 2016).

### *2.2.2. Education/skill development*

In the context of tourism entrepreneurship, openness to continuous learning, new ideas, and diverse experiences is crucial for entrepreneurs, despite the fact that the tourism industry has a higher rate of entrepreneurship compared to other sectors and a significant representation of women in its workforce. Many women are often confined to unskilled, low-paying positions within this field (Solvoll et al., 2015). Blau and Kahn (2020) revealed that the percentage of women entering entrepreneurial careers remains lower than that of men, and this gender gap tends to widen with higher levels of education. Another significant challenge for women entrepreneurs is the potential deficiency in the entrepreneurial expertise required to establish their businesses (Bonet et al., 2020). Often, they may have limited experience in the specific industry they intend to enter.

Insufficient knowledge and skills can pose substantial barriers to women's success in establishing enterprises (Ghosh, 2022). Furthermore, He and Wong (2021) highlighted gender disparities in numerical and financial skills, indicating that men tend to have greater proficiency in these areas compared to women. Entrepreneurship demands qualities such as self-assurance, leadership, and managerial capabilities, which are essential for entering new markets. Given that businesses frequently engage in complex decision-making processes related to financial resource acquisition and utilization, entrepreneurs must possess a high level of financial literacy and numerical proficiency. They encounter financial choices regularly, such as purchasing new equipment, hiring staff, or assessing the potential for project failure.

### *2.2.3. Community engagement*

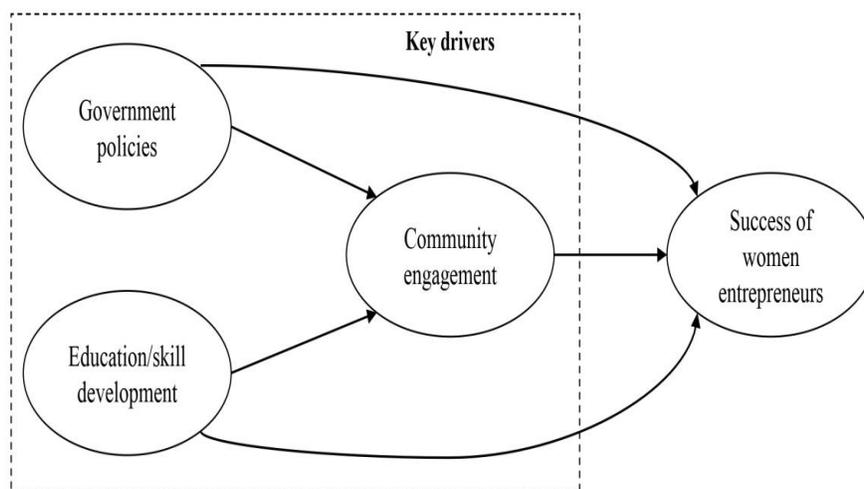
In recent times, there has been a growing trend towards entrepreneurship with the aim of contributing to societal betterment (Agrawal et al., 2022). Women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in driving economic progress, especially in developing countries, where their contributions become particularly essential (De Vita et al., 2014). Recent research underscores the significant potential of women entrepreneurs in entrepreneurial endeavors and their substantial contribution to economic advancement (Hechevarría et al., 2019). Their contributions span generating employment opportunities, bolstering GDP, and fostering positive outcomes in poverty

alleviation and social inclusivity. There is also an increasing recognition of the substantial impact women have had in the tourism sector (Samad and Alharthi, 2022).

Among these women, entrepreneurs hold a pivotal position in stimulating economic development and empowering local communities through their active participation in community-based tourism endeavors (McCall & Mearns, 2021). Women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector are instrumental in endorsing sustainable and ethical practices while promoting the preservation of local culture and heritage. They often demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental conservation, social responsibility, and active community involvement. Many of these entrepreneurs engage in tourism activities that highlight traditional arts, crafts, and cultural performances (Corrêa et al., 2022).

Enterprises led by women in the tourism industry tend to be more inclined to embrace sustainable approaches like conserving energy, minimizing waste, and supporting local suppliers (Font et al., 2016). Their emphasis on responsible tourism ensures that the sector contributes to environmental well-being and the prosperity of local communities, thereby promoting long-term sustainability. Through the preservation and transmission of cultural knowledge and traditions, women entrepreneurs enrich the authenticity and cultural depth of tourism experiences (Jamal & Camargo, 2018). Furthermore, their businesses create opportunities for cultural exchange and mutual understanding between tourists and local communities, fostering mutual respect and appreciation (Aririguzoh, 2022).

Women's entrepreneurship significantly influences business models and serves as a valuable mechanism for economic growth and increased employment opportunities (Urbano et al., 2020). Despite the importance of women's entrepreneurship, their participation rates remain lower than men (Aparicio et al., 2022). Consequently, addressing the key challenges and practical solutions to enhance women's entrepreneurship in developing countries is vital for policymakers, experts, and researchers (Ng et al., 2022). Globally, an estimated 252 million women run their enterprises, yet their entrepreneurial participation remains lower than men (Sahira & Surangi, 2022).



**Figure 1.** Theoretical framework.

### 2.3. Hypothesis development

In the tourism context, women entrepreneurs face numerous challenges, including limited social support, work-family balance issues, inadequate entrepreneurial education, and restricted access to financial resources (Samad & Alharthi, 2022). They also encounter barriers such as gender-based discrimination, knowledge gaps, and deficiencies in tourism marketing skills (Filimonau et al., 2022). However, personal qualities, marketing and management proficiency, diligent effort, and family support emerge as crucial success factors (Gupta and Mirchandani, 2018). Financial resource accessibility remains a significant challenge for women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector (Zhang et al., 2020), with some tourism institutions failing to prioritize women-led enterprises for credit opportunities and simplified application procedures (Figuroa-Domecq et al., 2022).

Encouraging more supportive practices within the tourism context is essential (Hoang et al., 2021). Government support plays a pivotal role in ensuring entrepreneurial success, especially for women, who often face gender inequality and discrimination (Franzke et al., 2022). Government support encompasses financial assistance, skill development, tax incentives, and resource access, all crucial for sustainable tourism growth (Sobaih et al., 2021). In developing countries, business environments can be challenging for women entrepreneurs in the tourism setting, impacting their prospects for success (Vossenber , 2013). The absence of government support programs and limited interest in women entrepreneurship create hurdles for long-term sustainability tourism (Iwu and Nxopo, 2015).

Financial resources are crucial for tourism business operations (Figuroa-Domecq et al., 2022), but women often face obstacles when seeking financial support due to complex loan application processes (Kim & Cho, 2020). Furthermore, financial and non-financial support enhances SME governance and sustainability, contributing to increased women's participation and success rates (Samad & Alharthi, 2022), which are essential for sustainable tourism development (Sobaih et al., 2021). Therefore, this paper assumes that:

*H1a. Government policies positively affect community engagement.*

*H1b. Government policies positively affect success of women tourism entrepreneurs.*

Recent studies underscore the critical importance of financial education and literacy for tourism owners and entrepreneurs (Sandhu & El-Gohary, 2022; Sumani et al., 2022). However, limited investigation has been conducted on the relationship between financial skills, entrepreneurship, and gender gaps (Brixiová et al., 2020). Insufficient financial literacy among aspiring entrepreneurs can undermine the outcomes and success prospects of their new tourism ventures (Di Vaio et al., 2022). Women entrepreneurs, who face challenges in accessing financial resources to start their tourism businesses, are frequently compelled to use their personal savings to fund their nascent business endeavors (Welsh et al., 2017).

In the tourism sector, untrained women often find themselves in lower positions with lower salaries compared to their male counterparts (Sun et al., 2022). The presence of financial skills and external support highlights the connection between entrepreneurship, gender, and disadvantage. Consequently, tourism businesses owned by women tend to be smaller and are less

likely to require or seek external capital (Nordbø, 2022). Robb and Watson (2012) also suggested that women entrepreneurs may rely less on financial performance metrics compared to their male counterparts. A significant challenge faced by women entrepreneurs is their deficiency in entrepreneurial skills (Ajuna et al., 2018), often lacking the knowledge and expertise required to effectively manage entrepreneurial endeavors in the tourism industry (Sandhu & El-Gohary, 2022). Therefore, this paper assumes that:

*H2a. Education/skill development positively affects success of women tourism entrepreneurs.*

*H2b. Education/skill development positively affects community engagement.*

Over past decades, there has been notable progress in women involvement in entrepreneurial endeavors, positively impacting national development (McCall & Mearns, 2021). However, women entrepreneurs still face challenges due to gender discrimination in the tourism sector (Ntanjana & Mangwane, 2019), which remains pervasive in many developing economies (Rehman et al., 2022). Additionally, limited access to financial resources, inadequate training, specific personality traits, and a lack of support from government and family members restrict women's ability to pursue entrepreneurship in developing countries (Chhabra et al., 2022). Regarding tourism setting, entrepreneurial success is influenced by formal (i.e., financial assistance, technical guidance, and industry connections) and informal support systems (i.e., personal and community networks) (Cunha et al., 2020). Thus, this paper assumes that:

*H3. Community engagement positively affects success of women tourism entrepreneurs.*

*H4a. Community engagement mediates the association between government policies and success of women tourism entrepreneurs.*

*H4c. Community engagement mediates the association between education/skill development and success of women tourism entrepreneurs.*

### **3. Methods**

#### *3.1. Research rationale and content validity*

The Egyptian tourism industry is one of the industries that generate a huge financial return to maximize the national economy. As such, travel agencies that adopt sustainable environmental practices without harming local communities are spreading in Egypt. To preserve these initiatives and enhance community participation in preserving resources in light of the climate change crisis, women entrepreneurs must be involved in implementing these initiatives (Samad & Alharthi, 2022). Entrepreneurs were chosen because they tend to take risks and experience new things (Anggadwita et al., 2022). As such, a purposive sampling approach was used to collect data from women entrepreneurs in the front-office department.

The front-office department was chosen in this paper because it is considered one of the most vital sections in which customer-employee interaction occurs directly before, during, and after the stay period (Akgunduz et al., 2022). Moreover, this paper focused on travel agencies located in Suez Canal and Sinai region, which is considered one of the important regions on the

northeastern side of Egypt (Abaza et al., 2022). Next, two subject-matter specialists translated the questionnaire from its original English into Arabic. Thus, this final survey was distributed to four professors of tourism marketing. As a result, they got original and translated surveys and had a thorough command of English grammar rules. This process takes care to evaluate the questionnaire's content to see if any incoming items have changed or if its substance is unclear.

### *3.2. Instruments*

Ten items were employed to gauge the education/skill development demanded by Ramadani et al. (2013). Government policies were assessed using 10 items modified from Zeidan and Bahrami (2011). To gauge community engagement, Zielinski et al. (2022) developed a ten-item scale. Moreover, 20 items were employed to assess the success of women entrepreneurs, adapted from Hu et al. (2022). This scale consists of four sub-structures: profitability and financial success; growth and expansion; customer satisfaction and positive feedback; and recognition and reputation, with five items each. A 7-point Likert scale was employed. In addition, categorical variables (i.e., age-wise and educational level) were incorporated as control variables to examine their potential impact on success of women entrepreneurs.

### *3.3. Pre-test and data gathering*

To evaluate the poll's validity using a Microsoft Form survey, 29 women entrepreneurs were given the questionnaire on March 26, 2022. In this way, the reliability of the pilot test was satisfactory for gathering the main data. Women entrepreneurs were recruited to participate voluntarily in the intended questionnaire through the National Council for Women forum for women employees in the service sector. Their phone numbers were obtained after their verbal consent through the attendance registration list at the forum. A week after the forum was held; such entrepreneurs who hold permanent jobs in travel agencies in Port Said, Sharm El-Sheikh, Ain Sokhna, and Ras Sidr were contacted via WhatsApp.

The number of travel agencies participating in the survey reached 38 after these pioneers verbally agreed to participate. Data were collected by sending a short link to the questionnaire that includes the purpose of conducting it and some instructions that prevent participants from biasing their response, such as not disclosing information to another party, not mentioning the participant's name, and putting the questionnaire items in an untidy manner, unlike what can be seen in the research form. From mid-April until the third week of May 2022, 436 completed responses were received. After careful examination of the encoded data, it was found that there were 40 responses that contained outliers that may be excluded for exceeding the permissible limit of 5%. G-Power was run to check our sample adequacy, and the extracted indicators showed that the final sample is sufficient for further statistical tests as the power index exceeded 80% with an effect size exceeding 0.50. As such, our sample size was 396 women entrepreneurs in 38 travel agencies, or approximately 10–12 women entrepreneurs in each targeted travel agencies.

### *3.6. Analysis strategy*

We employed structural equation modeling with partial least squares (PLS-SEM) to analyze the data. In past studies, PLS-SEM performed better than CB-SEM in examining the structural relationships between latent variables (Magno et al., 2022). According to Shmueli et al. (2019),

PLS-SEM can handle complex models with several latent variables. To assess the outer and inner models in PLS-SEM, SmartPLS v.4 was employed in this paper.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Demographics

Social-demographic data are included in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Respondents profile.

Category	Sample (n = 396)	
	Frequency	%
<i>Age-wise (years)</i>		
Below 21	30	7.6
22-34	186	47
35-44	133	33.6
45 or more	47	11.8
<i>Educational level</i>		
MSc/PhD	8	2
Bachelor	225	56.8
Diploma	47	11.9
Secondary school	116	29.3
<i>Professional experiences</i>		
Below 3 years	116	29.3
3-6 years	50	12.6
7-10 years	154	38.9
Above 10 years	76	19.2
<i>Business nature</i>		
Receptionist	39	9.8
Bookkeeper	92	23.2
Public relation officer	107	27
Security officer	68	17.2
Inquiries officer	53	13.4
Baggage bearer	37	9.3

Accordingly, Table 1 proved that 47% of participants were between the ages of 22 and 34. In addition, 56.8% held bachelor's degrees. Besides, 38.9% of individuals surveyed had a professional experience of seven to ten years; 29.3% had less than three years' experience. Lastly, 27% of respondents worked in public relations, followed by 23.2% in bookkeeping and 17.2% in security.

4.2. Outer model assessment

We employed SPSS v.28 to obtain mean and standard deviation values (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Items reliability.

Variables	Codes	Items	Findings					
			M	SD	Loadings	$\alpha$	CR	AVE
Community engagement	CME1	The local community recognizes and appreciates the contributions of women entrepreneurs in community-based tourism.	4.59	1.656	.826	.841	.942	.683
	CME2	Women entrepreneurs are involved in community development initiatives aimed at enhancing the tourism sector.	4.65	1.523	.828			
	CME3	Women entrepreneurs collaborate with local stakeholders, such as community leaders and organizations, to promote management practices within travel agencies.	4.41	1.585	.827			
	CME4	Women entrepreneur perspectives are taken into consideration when developing management policies and strategies in travel agencies.	4.52	1.672	.825			
	CME5	Women entrepreneurs actively engage with local communities to understand their needs and preferences for travel agencies offerings.	4.62	1.587	.825			
	CME6	The community values the role of women entrepreneurs in preserving and promoting local culture and heritage through tourism.	4.73	1.532	.829			
	CME7	Women entrepreneurs actively participate in initiatives that aim to improve the overall quality of travel agency services in the community.	4.95	1.523	.825			
	CME8	Women entrepreneurs actively contribute to the socioeconomic development of the local community through their travel agencies.	4.66	1.606	.828			
	CME9	Community-based tourism activities led by women entrepreneurs foster a sense of pride and identity within the local community.	4.50	1.631	.826			
	CME10	The local community recognizes and appreciates the contributions of women entrepreneurs in community-based tourism.	4.67	1.595	.827			

Education/skill development	ESD1	Education and training programs available for women entrepreneurs in travel agencies effectively enhance their entrepreneurial skills.	4.45	1.513	.753	.770	.928	.564
	ESD2	Women entrepreneurs have access to comprehensive training programs that cover various aspects of running travel agencies.	4.75	1.510	.747			
	ESD3	Continuous learning and skill development are important for the success of travel agencies' women entrepreneurs.	4.76	1.483	.747			
	ESD4	Capacity-building opportunities provided to women entrepreneurs significantly contribute to travel agencies knowledge.	5.07	1.584	.740			
	ESD5	Women entrepreneurs actively seek out educational resources and training opportunities to enhance their entrepreneurial capabilities.	4.31	1.695	.741			
	ESD6	The skills acquired through education and training programs enable travel agencies' women entrepreneurs to adapt with market demands.	4.74	1.679	.727			
	ESD7	Women entrepreneurs are encouraged to participate in industry-specific workshops and conferences to expand their knowledge.	4.40	1.660	.746			
	ESD8	Education development programs for women entrepreneurs are well-tailored to the specific needs of community-based tourism.	4.40	1.717	.747			
	ESD9	Women entrepreneurs perceive that their education developments positively impact the success of tourism businesses.	4.20	1.586	.777			
	ESD10	The community recognizes the value of education and skill development for travel agencies' women entrepreneurs.	4.72	1.728	.779			
Government policies	GPC1	Government policies and regulations support the development of women entrepreneurs in community-based tourism.	4.10	1.725	.890	.870	.945	.734
	GPC2	The government provides adequate support and incentives for women entrepreneurs within travel agencies.	4.19	1.853	.895			
	GPC3	Government initiatives facilitate access to funding opportunities for women entrepreneurs in community-based tourism.	4.73	1.646	.849			
	GPC4	The government actively promotes gender equality and women empowerment in the tourism industry through policy measures.	4.54	1.832	.846			
	GPC5	Women entrepreneurs receive adequate support and guidance from government agencies in starting their travel agencies.	4.35	1.751	.848			

	GPC6	Government policies create a favorable business environment for women entrepreneurs in the community-based tourism sector.	4.55	1.772	.848			
	GPC7	The government collaborates with relevant stakeholders to provide capacity-building programs and training for women entrepreneurs.	4.74	1.673	.846			
	GPC8	Women entrepreneurs perceive that they have equal opportunities and fair treatment compared to their male counterparts in the tourism industry.	4.50	1.905	.847			
	GPC9	The government encourages networking and collaboration among women entrepreneurs to enhance their business prospects.	4.77	1.587	.848			
	GPC10	Women entrepreneurs have a voice in shaping government policies and decisions related to community-based tourism.	4.41	1.552	.849			
Profitability and financial success	PFS1	I have consistently made money with my travel agency.	4.11	1.675	.870	.890	.938	.750
	PFS2	My travel agency's financial operations have been successfully managed.	4.07	1.865	.867			
	PFS3	My expectations were not met by the financial results of my travel agency.	4.59	1.667	.862			
	PFS4	My travel agency has benefited from the initiatives I have put in place, thanks to increased income.	4.40	1.912	.857			
	PFS5	To assist in the expansion of my travel agency, I have been able to find financial or investment alternatives.	4.14	1.702	.875			

Growth and expansion	GEX1	The demand from customers has increased for my travel agency.	4.76	1.393	.861	.883	.933	.736
	GEX2	I have increased the variety of goods and services I provide in my travel agency.	4.64	1.654	.857			
	GEX3	I have effectively tapped into new markets or niches.	4.46	1.668	.851			
	GEX4	I have formed alliances or partnerships that have aided in the expansion of my travel agency.	4.47	1.622	.864			
	GEX5	I have put plans in place to scale up and grow my travel agency operations.	4.68	1.764	.856			

Customer satisfaction and positive feedback	CSP1	Customers have praised the high caliber of my travel agency's products and services.	4.83	1.476	.849	.885	.934	.739
	CSP2	Travel agencies' customers have provided me with great reviews and remarks.	4.66	1.516	.862			
	CSP3	In my travel agency, I get a lot of repeat business.	4.60	1.597	.865			
	CSP4	Customers have referred others to my travel agency.	4.42	1.575	.862			
	CSP5	I addressed issues/concerns mentioned by travel agency's guests and properly handled their remarks.	4.74	1.498	.861			
Recognition and reputation	RGR1	Within the travel agency, customers know about my business reputation.	4.19	1.720	.737	.793	.868	.568
	RGR2	For my travel agency, I have won awards or been recognized.	4.09	1.675	.748			
	RGR3	My travel agency's success and influence are recognized by other stakeholders.	4.13	1.840	.740			
	RGR4	For my travel agency, I have received media or press publicity.	4.10	1.706	.785			
	RGR5	In community-based tourism, my travel agency is recognized as a pioneer or leader.	4.01	1.743	.756			
Success of women entrepreneurs	Profitability and financial success		4.26	1.573	.771	.753	.851	.589
	Growth and expansion		4.60	1.741	.747			
	Customer satisfaction and positive feedback		4.65	1.568	.763			
	Recognition and reputation		4.10	1.685	.788			

Findings showed that the weighted average scores ranged from high to extremely high. Besides, the AVE values exceed 50% using SmartPLS (see Table 2). Accordingly, all values that indicated internal reliability were above .70 for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Further, the model fit indicators were evaluated, showing that our model was satisfactory (SRMR = .043, NFI = .949, d\_ULS = .832, and d\_G = .523) (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

**Table 3.** Discriminant validity (HTMT).

<i>Construct</i>		M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Age-wise	1.80	.924						
2.	Educational level	3.13	.690	.097					
3.	Community engagement	4.63	1.021	.166	.067				
4.	Education/skill development	4.58	.924	.253	.006	.377			
5.	Government policies	4.49	1.177	.202	.085	.308	.319		
6.	Success of women entrepreneurs	4.40	.910	.069	.030	.242	.188	.295	

The final step was to assess discriminant validity using the hetrotrait-monotrait (HTMT) criteria. The HTMT ratio must be less than 0.85 for all scales , as indicated in Table 3.

*4.2. Inner model assessment*

A confidence interval (CI) and bootstrapping approach with a 5000-resample sample were run to assess the inner model.

**Table 4.** Path analysis results.

<i>Control variables</i>							
	Paths	$\beta$	t-value	p-value	95%CI	Decision?	
	Age-wise → Success of women entrepreneurs	.068	1.370	.171	-.029; .165	No effect	
	Educational level → Success of women entrepreneurs	-.040	-.595	.552	-.170; .091	No effect	
<i>Direct effects</i>							
H1 a	Government policies → Community engagement	.308** *	6.431	.000	.186; .349	Supported	
H1 b	Government policies → Success of women entrepreneurs	.295** *	6.117	.000	.154; .301	Supported	
H2 a	Education/skill development→ Community engagement	.377** *	8.074	.000	.315; .518	Supported	
H2 b	Education/skill development→ Success of women entrepreneurs	.188** *	3.794	.000	.089; .281	Supported	
H3	Community engagement → Success of women entrepreneurs	.242** *	4.941	.000	.130; .301	Supported	
<i>Indirect effects</i>							
H4 a	Government policies → Community engagement → Success of women entrepreneurs	.075* *	2.570	.019	.018; .131	Partial mediation	
H4 b	Education/skill development→ Community engagement → Success of women entrepreneurs	.091** *	3.146	.007	.034; .148	Partial mediation	

Table 4 findings proved that age-wise had no effect on success of women entrepreneurs ( $\beta = .068$ ,  $t = .171$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $CI = -.029; .165$ ). Besides, educational level had no effect on success of women entrepreneurs ( $\beta = -.040$ ,  $t = -.595$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $CI = -.170; .091$ ). On the other hand, government policies positively affected community engagement ( $\beta = .308$ ,  $t = 6.431$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and success of women entrepreneurs ( $\beta = .295$ ,  $t = 6.117$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, H1a and H1b were accepted.

Likewise, education/skill development positively affected community engagement ( $\beta = .377$ ,  $t = 8.074$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and success of women entrepreneurs ( $\beta = .188$ ,  $t = 3.794$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, H2a and H2b were accepted. Furthermore, community engagement positively affected success of women entrepreneurs ( $\beta = .242$ ,  $t = 4.941$ ,  $p < .001$ ), thereby supporting H3. These findings showed that partial mediation occurs when both direct and indirect paths are relevant. Given our findings, we were able to establish that community engagement partially mediated the indirect hypotheses.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper underscores the importance of government policies, education, and community engagement in enhancing the success of women entrepreneurs in the Egyptian tourism industry. It provides valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders to support and empower women entrepreneurs in this sector, ultimately contributing to the sustainable growth of the industry. Findings highlighted the crucial role of women entrepreneurs in the Egyptian tourism industry, particularly in travel agencies. It is evident that government policies and education/skill development programs play pivotal roles in fostering community engagement among women entrepreneurs and, subsequently, in their overall success. These findings align with previous research (De Vita et al., 2014; (Tajeddini et al., 2017; Hammami et al., 2022), emphasizing the importance of education, government support, and community involvement in entrepreneurship success.

Furthermore, the partial mediation of community engagement underscores its significance as a mechanism through which government policies and education programs positively impact the success of women entrepreneurs. However, it is essential to recognize the complexity of the Egyptian tourism industry and the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. Further research and interventions are needed to address these challenges and create an environment conducive to their growth and success.

### 5.1. Implications

This paper provides some contractions in the hopasitality industry. First, government policies should continue to support and incentivize women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector, ensuring equal opportunities and a favorable business environment. Moreover, policymakers should consider the positive impact of such policies on community engagement and the overall success of women entrepreneurs. Second, the tourism industry should provide comprehensive education and skill development programs tailored to the specific needs of women entrepreneurs. Continuous learning and capacity-building opportunities should be made accessible to enhance their entrepreneurial capabilities.

Third, tourism stakeholders, including travel agencies, should recognize the value of community engagement as a means to enhance customer satisfaction, reputation, and financial success. Collaborative initiatives that involve women entrepreneurs in community

development should be encouraged. Lastly, this paper contributes to the growing body of literature on women entrepreneurs in the context of sustainability and community engagement. It provides a framework for future research in this field.

### 5.2. Future needs and limitations

A comparative analysis of women entrepreneurs in different regions of Egypt or in other countries could provide valuable insights into the cultural and contextual factors that influence their success. Besides, qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews and case studies, could provide a deeper understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the Egyptian tourism industry. However, this paper has some limitations, as follows:

- **Sampling bias:** The study utilized purposive sampling, which may introduce some degree of sampling bias. Findings may not be fully representative of all women entrepreneurs in the Egyptian tourism industry.
- **Self-reported data:** Data collected relied on self-reported responses from travel agency women employees. There may be issues related to response bias or social desirability bias.
- **Contextual specificity:** Findings are specific to the context of the Egyptian tourism industry and may not be directly applicable to other regions or industries.
- **Causality:** While this paper identifies relationships between variables, it does not establish causality. Further research is needed to explore causal relationships more thoroughly.

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## الدوافع الرئيسية لنجاح رائدات الأعمال في الخطوط الأمامية: شواهد من شركات السفر بإقليم قناة

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المعلومات المقالة	الملخص
<b>الكلمات المفتاحية</b> شركات السفر؛ رائدات الأعمال؛ السياسات الحكومية؛ المشاركة المجتمعية؛ المكاتب الأمامية.	بالنظر إلى أن الدراسات التجريبية الحديثة، فقد تم تجاهل الدور المحوري لرائدات الأعمال في صناعة السياحة؛ فإن إجراء دراسة متعمقة حول كيفية نجاح رائدات الأعمال في هذه الصناعة الحيوية قد يكون أجندة بحثية جديدة. نتيجة لذلك، تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من كيفية نجاح رائدات الأعمال العاملين بالخطوط الأمامية في شركات السفر من خلال السياسات الحكومية، المشاركة المجتمعية، وتطوير المهارات والمستوى التعليمي كمحركات رئيسية لتحقيق هذا النجاح. باستخدام استطلاع عبر الإنترنت تم إعداده عبر منصة Microsoft Form، استجابت 396 من المشرفات التي يعملن في قسم المكاتب الأمامية داخل 38 شركة للسفر بإقليم قناة السويس وسيناء. تم ترميز البيانات باستخدام SPSS v.28 وتم تحليلها باستخدام SmartPLS v.4. كشفت النتائج عن التأثير الإيجابي للسياسات الحكومية وتطوير المهارات والمستوى التعليمي في المشاركة المجتمعية لرائدات الأعمال ومدى نجاح أعمالهن في تلك المجتمعات. إلى جانب ذلك، أثرت المشاركة المجتمعية بشكل إيجابي في نجاح رائدات الأعمال في تلك الشركات. علاوة على ذلك، توسطت المشاركة المجتمعية جزئياً في التأثير غير المباشر على نجاح رائدات الأعمال في قسم المكاتب الأمامية من خلال كل من السياسات الحكومية وتطوير المهارات والمستوى التعليمي. تُعد هذه أولى الدراسات التجريبية ذات الصلة بزيادة الأعمال النسائية داخل شركات السفر في مصر؛ نظراً لدورها الحيوي في المشاركة المجتمعية وتعزيز ممارسات الإدارة الاستراتيجية داخل هذه الشركات.
<b>(JAAUTH)</b> المجلد ٢٢، العدد ٢، (٢٠٢٢)، ص ٣٧٦-٣٥٥.	