

Nuanced Gender Perceptions on the Influences of Formal Education and Business Networks on Tourism-Related Business Operations: Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa

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Abstract: Entrepreneurship contributes significantly to every nation's socio-economic development. Previous studies reveal that having adequate formal education and belonging to relevant business networks can be indicators of successful business development. However, some of these studies show that female-owned businesses are facing more challenges than their male-owned counterparts. This study explored nuanced gender perceptions on the influences that formal education and business networks can have on tourism-related business operations in Durban Central Business District, KwaZulu-Natal. A questionnaire survey was used to collect data from purposively selected 150 (75 females and 75 males) tourism-related entrepreneurs. We employed descriptive, bivariate and multivariate data analyses in this study. This study did not make a conclusive finding that gender plays a role in differentiating business success or performance, as mostly perceived. However, respondents with tertiary education agree more to being successful than those without tertiary education; male entrepreneurs agree more than female entrepreneurs that level of formal education is key to business performance; and male entrepreneurs tend to be more active members of business networks. This study recommends that entrepreneurship training and mentorship programmes should emphasise that formal education (not gender) supports business success, and encourage women entrepreneurs to be active members of relevant business networks.

Keywords: gender nuances; business operations; business performance; business networks; sub-Saharan Africa

JEL Classification: J16

1. Introduction

KwaZulu-Natal is one of the nine provinces of South Africa. The tourism statistics extracted from the recent State of the Province Address show that tourism has a significant contribution in the KwaZulu-Natal local economy, and continues to grow from a R9billion contribution to the Provincial Gross Domestic Product in 2014 to more than R10billion by 2018 (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, 2019). Ezeuduji and Nkosi (2017) state that the province of KwaZulu-Natal is renowned for its heritage and cultural experiences. Most visitors to the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa are mostly pulled by the warm weather, nature, culture and beach experience, offered in both its coastal and inland regions. Tourism in KwaZulu-Natal thrives on tourist volumes and the quality of the tourists' experience. It is no

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gainsaying therefore that tourism-related entrepreneurship is vital in this province to service both domestic and international tourists. Durban is the commercial hub of the KwaZulu-Natal Province.

Entrepreneurship drives every nation's economy. Developing countries are putting more emphasis on building a strong economy by promoting entrepreneurship. South Africa, like any other developing country developed policies that place high value on entrepreneurship (Business Environment Specialist, 2013). However, research by Iwu et al. (2016) reveals that entrepreneurial activity in South Africa is very low. South African government has identified tourism as a huge potential for economic growth (Tshabalala & Ezeuduji, 2016), hence entrepreneurship in the tourism industry is a welcome initiative. Gender mainstreaming (see Shepard, 2015) in entrepreneurship has attracted the attention of recent researchers. Many studies are therefore exploring entrepreneurship differences among genders. According to Sarfaraz et al. (2014), economic development cannot be achieved without the active participation of women. Unfortunately, South African tourism industry has inadequate women participation. Studies shows that women in tourism and other sectors' businesses occupy low position (Tshabalala & Ezeuduji, 2016) and they have less opportunities for advanced career development in these businesses (Ferguson, 2011). This may predict that South African women may remain in the periphery of economic development. Also the performance of women-owned businesses have been reported to be lower and very constrained in comparison to men-owned businesses (Marlow & McAdam, 2013), as they are likely to close down and less likely to make profit (Fairlie & Robb, 2009).

Literature on women entrepreneurship reveal that there are certain challenges (such as lack of management capabilities, inadequate financial capital, unfavourable societal perception, weak entrepreneurial networking) faced by women with reference to starting and managing businesses in South Africa (Tshabalala & Ezeuduji, 2016; Nxopo & Iwu, 2016). It has also been reported for the entire Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, that management positions in tourism industry is dominated by males (Nyaruwata & Nyaruwata, 2013; Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), 2012). There has been a global call to empower women, and women entrepreneurship is socially and economically desirable (Kimbu et al., 2019), owing to its ability to create job opportunities, enhance women empowerment, and alleviate poverty (Mkhize & Cele, 2017), specifically in the tourism industry with its high potential for economic growth. Regarding entrepreneurial success, adequate formal education (Jiyane et al., 2013; Iwu & Nxopo, 2015; Ramadani, 2015; Iwu et al., 2016) and formation of business networks (Alam et al., 2012; Greenberg & Mollick, 2017; Jha et al., 2018; Santos et al., 2019) have been earmarked as very important, among other factors, in driving business success. Much of the previous studies did explore women entrepreneurs' challenges and perceptions on business operations, but have not compared perceptions of both genders in the same study, to unearth significant differences.

This study therefore explored nuanced gender perceptions on the influences that proposed business success factors, such as formal education and business networks can have on tourism-related business operations, using the case of Durban Central Business District, KwaZulu-Natal.

2. Overview of Literature

Okereke (2019) defines entrepreneurship as a dynamic process of vision, change and venture creation, which may require certain information, knowledge and skills in order to take place. Ramadani (2015) stresses that formal education plays a major role in business management and problem solving arising in business. Educational factors are considered to be influential in entrepreneurial management because those who possess secondary and tertiary education background seem to have better access to information (Jiyane et al., 2013). Information is also considered an important resource for starting and managing a business (Iwu & Nxopo, 2015). Tajeddin et al. (2017) suggest that education can help entrepreneurs, particularly females who may have less access to resources in starting their businesses, as education provides the necessary information (Zlatkiov, 2015). McGowan et al. (2015) argue that level of education does not determine entrepreneurial skills, however, education is related to knowledge and skills, self-confidence, problem solving, commitment and discipline (Ali, 2018), which are factors that contribute to entrepreneurial performance. Many other authors in Africa (such as Iwu *et al.* 2016; Ezeuduji & Ntshangase, 2017a, b) also cited that formal education supports entrepreneurship process and development.

Lack of education in African countries has been labelled as one of the key challenges hindering the success of women entrepreneurs (Daniyan-Bagudu et al., 2016; Chinomona & Maziriri, 2015; Nsengimana et al. 2017). Compared to men, educational backgrounds of women entrepreneurs are reported to be generally weaker (Sudarmanti *et al.*, 2013). It must be noted however that entrepreneurs in Africa are more likely to be pushed into entrepreneurship by the prevailing socio-economic factors, such as unemployment (Mersha & Sriram, 2019). It is therefore likely that such necessity entrepreneurs may not have the required skills to effectively develop and manage their enterprises. Chirwa (2008) posits that women lack business training skills and have less business experience than men. Kuada's (2009) study on gender and entrepreneurship in Ghana also indicate that male entrepreneurs have more university education compared to women entrepreneurs who have mostly high school education. Recent South African literature on entrepreneurship indicates that there is a lower level of education among women entrepreneurs. Nxopo and Iwu (2016) posit that women's level of education is relatively low: about 4% with diploma qualification, 56% with matric certificate (secondary school), and 26% with qualifications lower than matric. Jiyane et al. (2012) found that 62% of women entrepreneurs have primary education and 27% had no formal education.

Compared to men, women form part of informal (family and friends) networks (Jha et al., 2018; Santos et al., 2019). Whereas men have a broader range of entrepreneurial mentors on their networks than women (Greenberg & Mollick, 2017). Family and friends are perceived as weak and powerless entrepreneurial network, since they are not very helpful in terms of business growth or strong start-up (Vossenbergh, 2013), though they can provide emotional support (Welsh et al., 2017). However, having network of family and friends that are self-employed is very important (Alam *et al.*, 2012).

3. Research Design and Methods

As earlier stated, this study explored nuanced gender perceptions on the influences that proposed business success factors, such as formal education and business networks can have on tourism-related business operations, using the case of Durban Central Business District, KwaZulu-Natal. The nature of this study required a questionnaire survey to address the objectives of this study (see Veal, 2011). We distributed structured questionnaires using purposive sampling method, selecting those who have specific knowledge (tourism business owners and managers) in tourism entrepreneurship and are willing to participate (Etikan et al., 2015; Nardi, 2018). The criteria of inclusion in this study was that a tourism business is an enterprise that falls into the travel sector (transport and travel organisers), hospitality sector (accommodation and events), leisure and business sector, conservation sector, sports and recreation sector, gaming and lotteries sector, tourism support service sector and government tourism sector. As the actual target population for this study is largely unknown due to many of these businesses falling under the informal sector (not registered), this study used non-probability (purposive) sampling to survey 150 respondents (75 male and 75 female entrepreneurs) in their tourism businesses in Durban Central Business District under Ethekewini Metropolitan Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. We took special care in distributing questionnaires to create a fair comparison of the characteristics of male entrepreneurs against female entrepreneurs; and how they respond to the business operation factors: 'level of formal education and training' and 'ability to form business networks'. As this study is non-probability in nature, we considered a sample size of 150 tourism entrepreneurs large enough to address the research objectives. Chawla and Sondh (2011) reckon that a sample should not be too small to achieve data saturation or theoretical saturation.

Data collected were analysed using IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 25. We employed descriptive statistics (percentage frequencies and mean scores of responses), bivariate analyses (Mann-Whitney U, Spearman's Rank Correlation and Pearson's Chi-Square tests) and multivariate analysis (Reliability tests using Cronbach's Alpha). Our initial data analysis revealed non-normal population distributions of the ordinal variables we used in measuring business operation statements (perceptions); hence we conducted Mann-Whitney U tests of comparing means of responses from two independent groups (demographic variables) to check if these are significantly different from one other. We compared responses to business operation statements with respondents' gender. We conducted Mann-Whitney U tests based on the prescribed criteria that the dependent variables have ordinal scale; the independent variables have only two groups; and normality of distribution and homogeneity of variance did not prove true in a t-test (George & Mallery, 2003; Veal, 2011). Spearman's Correlation (two-tailed) test explored relationships between ranked or ordinal variables, to find out if there are positive or negative correlations between the variables being analysed (Veal, 2011); which for this study is between business operation statements and perceived business success classification. Pearson's Chi-Square test was used to explore relationships between categorical / nominal data, where some variables that were previously measured in ordinal scale were recoded as categorical variable to support this analysis. Respondents' profiles were compared with business start-up motivation and perception of entrepreneurial success. Reliability test, a form of multivariate analysis, was used by this study to explore the level of internal consistencies of variables used to describe factors influencing business operations ('level of formal education and training' and 'ability to form business

networks’). Finn et al. (2000) support the use of multivariate analysis in tourism studies where a particular phenomenon is likely to be influenced by a large number of variables rather than a single one. Previous researchers suggest that Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of between 0. 5 and 0. 7 is acceptable in the social science research, to denote adequate internal consistency of variables used in measuring a factor or dimension (George & Mallery, 2003; Chawla & Sondhi, 2011). However, Tavakol and Dennick (2011) posit that low Cronbach’s Alpha score may result if there is a weak interrelationship among variables used in the analysis, or if few variables are being used to explain a particular dimension or factor. From the reliability tests conducted on the two business operation dimensions, ‘level of formal education and training’ and ‘ability to form business networks’; dimensions achieved above 0. 5 Cronbach Alpha coefficient, hence this study finds the variables contained in these dimension, internally consistent or related, to measure each of the dimensions.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Respondent’s Profile

The results presented in Table 1 show that respondents in this study are mostly South Africans (about 89%) and about 61% of the respondents had business experience of not more than six years.

Table 1. Respondents’ Profile (N=150)

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
South African	Yes	88. 7
	No	11. 3
Gender	Male	50
	Female	50
Ethnic group	Black	52. 7
	White	18. 0
	Indian	22. 0
	Coloured	7. 3
Age group	Less than 40 years	61. 3
	40 years and above	38. 7
Business owner	Yes	63. 3
	No	36. 7
Business manager	Yes	58. 7
	No	41. 3
Motivation to start tourism business	Took opportunity	54. 4
	Means of survival	45. 6
Level of Education	Up to Secondary School (Matric)	44. 0
	Tertiary Education	56. 0
Type of Business	Accommodation	16. 0
	Food and Beverage	26. 7
	Events Management	10. 0
	Tour Operation	3. 3
	Travel Agency	4. 7
	Tour Guide	2. 7
	Car Rentals	7. 3
	Resorts	2. 0
	Consultancy	2. 7
	Souvenir Shop	24. 7

Number of years in business	Up to 6 years	60.7
	7years and above	39.3
Self-classification as an entrepreneur	Very successful	13.4
	Successful	43.6
	Surviving	32.2
	Struggling	9.4
	Unsuccessful	1.4

Nsengimana et al. (2017) argue that business experience influences the chances of entrepreneurial success. Entrepreneurs’ motivation to start a tourism business as means of survival is somewhat lower (about 46%) compared to the motivation of starting a business to take an opportunity (about 54%). According to Mersha and Sriram (2019), in most African countries, entrepreneurs are pushed into business by socio-economic factors (such as lack of job opportunities). This study however found that majority of respondents in this study started businesses based on available opportunity. The level of education was also perceived as an important factor in business operation (Fairlie & Robb, 2009; Ramadani, 2015). The results of this study show that 56% had tertiary education. The results further indicate that majority of respondents (57%) perceived themselves as successful in their businesses, as about 13% saw themselves as very successful and about 44% saw themselves as successful.

4.2. Business Operation Statements

This study’s findings (Table 2) indicate that the respondents perceive formal education and training as an important asset in running a tourism business, as about 77% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed to: ‘the manager’s level of formal education is key to the performance of tourism businesses. Additionally, about 77% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that ‘a business owner/manager should take a business training before starting a tourism business’ and 80% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with ‘I believe that formal education has contributed in strengthening and developing my leadership skills’.

Previous studies (such as Ramadani, 2015; Zlatkov, 2015) posit that entrepreneurs perceive education as one of the key components of entrepreneurial success. This position aligns with the results of this study. About 65% of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement: ‘male business owners are better trained than female business owners’ and only 16% agreed or strongly agreed to this statement. These results contradict Chirwa’s (2008) argument that women lack business training and experience compared to men. Most of the respondents answered in affirmation that ‘they have the ability to run a successful tourism business with their own knowledge’ (about 84% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with this statement); which may also be attributed to the level of education evident among the respondents.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement towards variables or statements showing their ‘ability to form business network’. Being part of an entrepreneurial network is regarded as one of the important factors that support business management and development (Klyver & Grant, 2010; Lans et al., 2015; Srećković, 2018). Majority of the respondents agreed to the statement: ‘I depend on other business owners in order to succeed in my business’, as about 65% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Results in this study present that about equal numbers of respondents participate or do not participate in entrepreneurial networking, as 46% strongly agreed or

agreed with the statement: ‘I am an active member of a tourism business network (union)’; and about 45% of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement. About 37% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that ‘there are no tourism business networks in my area’, while about 45% strongly disagreed or agreed. The results mean that more respondents are benefiting from participating in the available entrepreneurial networks as they depend on other entrepreneurs to succeed in business, however a significant number of respondents are not. Networking provides entrepreneurs with sources of information and means of promoting their businesses (Gidarakou, 2015; Jonsson, 2015; Rauch et al., 2016; Santos et al., 2019). About 47% of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement: ‘there is no time for attending business network meetings’, while about 33% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed. These results show that entrepreneurs can make time for entrepreneurial networking, as they benefit from such platforms.

Table 2. Business Operation Statements (%)

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2.1 Level of Formal Education and Training					
The manager’s level of formal education is key to the performance of tourism business	40.7	36.7	7.3	12.7	2.7
A business owner/manager should take a business training before starting a tourism business	44.0	32.7	11.3	12.0	0.0
I have the ability to run a successful tourism business with my own knowledge	33.3	51.3	7.3	7.3	0.7
I believe that formal education has contributed in strengthening and developing my leadership skills.	42.0	38.0	5.3	10.7	4.0
Male business owners are better trained than female business owners	10.0	6.0	18.7	51.3	14.0
<i>Reliability statistics (Level of Formal Education and Training): Cronbach’s Alpha = . 542, N of items = 5, Valid cases = 150 (100%), Excluded cases = 0 (0. 0%), Total =150</i>					
2.2 Ability to form Business Networks					
I am an active member of a tourism business network (union)	23.3	22.7	8.7	33.3	12.0
There are no tourism business networks in my area	15.3	21.3	18.7	32.0	12.7
I depend on other business owners in order to succeed	16.7	48.0	12.0	14.7	8.7

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in my business					
There is no time for attending business network meetings	14.7	18.7	20.0	42.7	4.0
I can meet with other business owners at social gatherings	35.3	44.7	5.3	14.0	0.7
<i>Reliability statistics (Ability to form Business Networks): Cronbach's Alpha = .504, N of items = 5, Valid cases = 150 (100%), Excluded cases = 0 (0.0%), Total = 150</i>					

4.3. Correlating Perception of Entrepreneurial Success Level versus Business Operation Statements

Spearman's Rank Correlation test was performed between respondents' responses to 'perception of entrepreneurial success level' and 'business operation statements. Based on the results in Table 3, it is evident that the gender specific variable: 'male business owners are better trained than female business owners' has no correlation with perceived entrepreneurial success level. There are variables / statements identified to positively correlate with business success in this study. These are statements related to managers' level and impact of formal education, prior business training, membership of business networks, and socialising with business networks. These point that adequate formal education, business training, and membership of business networks positively influence entrepreneurial success level.

Table 3. Correlating Perception of Entrepreneurial Success Level Versus Business Operation Statements

Statements ^a	Correlated with perception of entrepreneurial success level ^b
3. 1 Level of Formal Education and Training	
The manager's level of formal education is key to the performance of tourism business	
A business owner/manager should take a business training before starting a tourism business	
I have the ability to run a successful tourism business with my own knowledge	N. S
I believe that formal education has contributed in strengthening and developing my leadership skills.	
Male business owners are better trained than female business owners	N. S
3. 2 Ability to form Business Networks	
I am an active member of a tourism business network (union)	
There are no tourism business networks in my area	N. S
I depend on other business owners in order to succeed in my business	N. S
There is no time for attending business network meetings	N. S
I can meet with other business owners at social gatherings	

^aQuestionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale (business operation statements): 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3, Neutral; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

Questionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale (perceptions of entrepreneurial success level): 1, Very successful; 2, Successful; 3, Surviving; 4, Struggling; 5, Unsuccessful.

^bSpearman's Rank correlation (two-tailed) test significance: $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$; N. S. no significant results

4.4. Comparing Demographic Variables with Business Start-Up Motivation and Perceptions of Entrepreneurial Success Level

In this study, the demographic variables were further compared with business start-up motivation and perceptions of entrepreneurial success level (using Pearson’s Chi-Square and Mann-Whitney U tests, respectively). Results in Table 4 show that there is no significant relationship between ‘gender’, ‘age group’, and ‘number of years in business’ with ‘business start-up motivation’. Based on the focus of this study, gender did not explain any choice between being ‘opportunity’ and ‘survival’ entrepreneur. Nationality and educational level were identified as the socio-demographic characteristics that have significant influence on the type of motivation to start a tourism business in this study. Results indicate that respondents with tertiary education are more ‘opportunity’ entrepreneurs while respondents without tertiary education are more ‘survival’ entrepreneurs. South Africans are more ‘opportunity’ entrepreneurs whereas non-South Africans are more ‘survival’ entrepreneurs. According to Mersha and Sriram (2019), majority of entrepreneurs in Africa are forced to start a business as a means of survival due to socio-economic challenges. In this case, non-South African entrepreneurs may struggle to find long-term resident permit in South Africa, and may be discriminated against in the labour market. They may therefore end up starting a business to survive in South Africa. The ability to secure decent job opportunities may also be a big challenge to those without tertiary education, and they may end up becoming ‘survival’ entrepreneurs. These results support Mersha and Sriram’s (2019) argument that the purpose of starting a business as a means of survival is related to socio-economic challenges.

Table 4. Comparing Demographic Variables with Business start-up Motivation and Perceptions of Entrepreneurial Success

Statements		Evidence from analysis	Compared with respondents’ demographic variables ^c
Motivation to start tourism business^{a, c}			
		Cross-tabulation results	
Nationality	South Africans	Expected count for opportunity entrepreneurs = 71. 8; Actual count = 79	South Africans are more ‘opportunity entrepreneurs’, while Non South Africans are more ‘survival’ entrepreneurs
	Non South Africans	Expected count for survival entrepreneurs = 7. 6; Actual count = 15	
Gender	Male		N. S.
	Female		
Age group	Less than 40 years		N. S
	40 years and above		
Level of Education	Up to Secondary School	Expected count for opportunity entrepreneurs = 45. 1; Actual count = 52	Respondents with tertiary education are more ‘opportunity entrepreneurs’ while respondents without tertiary education are more ‘survival’ entrepreneurs
	Tertiary education	Expected count for survival entrepreneurs = 29. 7; Actual count = 37	
No. of years in business	Up to 6 years		N. S.
	7years and above		

Perceptions of entrepreneurial success level ^{b, d}			
		Mean scores	
Nationality	South Africans	2. 42	N. S.
	Non South Africans	2. 41	
Gender	Male	2. 49	N. S.
	Female	2. 35	
Age group	Less than 40 years	2. 34	N. S.
	40 years and above	2. 53	
Level of Education	Up to Secondary School	2. 79	Respondents with tertiary education agree to being more successful
	Tertiary education	2. 12	
No. of years in business	Up to 6 years	2. 39	N. S.
	7years and above	2. 46	

^aQuestionnaire was itemised categorically: 1, Took opportunity; 2, Means of survival

^bQuestionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale (perceptions of entrepreneurial success level): 1, Very successful; 2, Successful; 3, Surviving; 4, Struggling; 5, Unsuccessful.

^cPearson’s Chi-Square test significance; $p < 0. 05$; $p < 0. 01$; N. S., no significant results.

^dMann-Whitney U test significance; $p < 0. 05$; $p < 0. 01$; N. S., no significant results.

Based on the results in Table 4, the only socio-demographic characteristic that has a significant influence on ‘entrepreneurial success level’ is the ‘level of formal education’. Respondents with tertiary education perceived themselves more successful than those without tertiary education. According to Nxopo and Iwu (2016), and Rao (2018), formal education equips entrepreneurs with skills (such as financial management, use of technology, sourcing of information) to effectively manage business operations. Formal education serves as basis for accessing and utilising information to run a business successfully (Iwu & Nxopo, 2015). Also relating to this study findings, lack of formal education has been labelled a major challenge towards business operations’ success (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2015; Daniyan-Bagudu et al., 2016; Nsengimana et al., 2017). Entrepreneurs with higher level of education are better prepared to handle entrepreneurial challenges that may arise in the business (Meunier et al., 2017), and be able to operate the business successfully.

4.5. Comparing Gender Identity with Business Operation Statements

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement towards business operations’ variables; these responses were then compared with respondents’ gender. This study employed Mann-Whitney U test to check if there are significant relationships between gender identity and the business operations variables. Results in Table 5 show that there are some significant differences between male and female mean scores regarding some of the variables used to describe business operations. Male respondents in this study agreed more than female respondents to the statements: ‘the manager’s level of formal education is key to the performance of tourism business’, ‘I am an active member of a tourism business network (union)’, and ‘I can meet with other business owners at social gatherings.

Table 5. Comparing Gender Identity with Business Operation Statements

Statements ^a	Mean score (Males)	Mean score (Females)	Compared with gender ^b
5. 1 Level Of Formal Education And Training			
The manager’s level of formal education is key to the performance of tourism business	1. 80	2. 20	Males agree more
A business owner/manager should take a business training before starting a tourism business	1. 89	1. 93	N. S.
I have the ability to run a successful tourism business with my own knowledge	1. 97	1. 84	N. S.
I believe that formal education has contributed in strengthening and developing my leadership skills.	1. 81	2. 12	N. S.
Male business owners are better trained than female business owners	3. 45	3. 61	N. S.
5. 2 Ability to form Business Networks			
I am an active member of a tourism business network (union)	2. 57	3. 19	Males agree more
There are no tourism business networks in my area	3. 09	3. 01	N. S.
I depend on other business owners in order to succeed in my business	2. 52	2. 49	N. S.
There is no time for attending business network meetings	3. 04	3. 01	N. S.
I can meet with other business owners at social gatherings	1. 80	2. 20	Males agree more

^aQuestionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale (business operation statements): 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3, Neutral; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

^bMann-Whitney U test significance; $p < 0. 05$; $p < 0. 01$; N. S., no significant results.

Considering the nature of the statements where males agreed more than females, it is notable that male respondents are more into business management dynamics that support business operations system



(Ramadani, 2015; Zlatkov, 2015; Tajeddin et al., 2017). Male respondents agreed more than female respondents that 'the manager's level of formal education is key to the performance of tourism business. Iwu and Nxopo (2015, Nxopo and Iwu (2016), and Rao (2018) expressed the importance of formal education in equipping entrepreneurs with skills (such as financial management, use of technology, sourcing and utilising information) to effectively manage business operations.

Daniyan-Bagudu et al. (2016) note that women entrepreneurs are not aware of the available entrepreneurial networks. It is therefore not surprising, from the results of this study (Table 5) that male respondents agreed more than female respondents that they are active members of tourism business networks and they also meet with other business owners at social gatherings. Gidarakou (2015) notes that compared to men, women have a lower social position; and this may affect their access to critical information and resources. The results in this study are in line with Klyver and Grant's (2010) view that women entrepreneurs are less likely to be part of entrepreneurial networks. Entrepreneurial networking is an important source of obtaining information, resources and business promotion (Klyver & Grant, 2010; Hodges et al., 2015; Lans et al., 2015; Srećković, 2018).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, we explored nuanced gender perceptions on the influences that the level of formal education and belonging to business networks can have on tourism-related business operations, using the case of Durban Central Business District, KwaZulu-Natal. Firstly, we found that adequate formal education, business training, and membership of business networks positively influence entrepreneurial success level. Secondly, gender has no effect on business start-up motivation (becoming 'opportunity' or 'survival' entrepreneur). Thirdly, the only socio-demographic characteristic that has a significant influence on 'entrepreneurial success level' is the 'level of formal education'. Respondents with tertiary education perceived themselves more successful than those without tertiary education. Fourthly, male respondents agreed more than female respondents that they are active members of tourism business networks and they also meet with other business owners at social gatherings. This study therefore recommends more entrepreneurship training and mentorship programmes in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa; and these should emphasise that formal education (not gender) supports business success, and encourage women entrepreneurs to be active members of relevant business networks, that support their business growth and development.

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