

## **The Influence of Gender on Entrepreneur Identity Aspiration in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector**

### **L'influence du genre sur l'aspiration identitaire de l'entrepreneur dans le secteur du tourisme et de l'hôtellerie**

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### Abstract

Hotel-Catering-Tourism (HCT) is an important sector of the economy in a number of countries, often representing more than 5% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP), especially in France and Senegal. This research examines the influence of gender on the motivation of students in the HCT sector to endorse an entrepreneur identity by comparing two countries: France, an individualist society where the economy is 'innovation-driven' and Senegal, a more collectivist country whose economy is 'factor-driven', according to the classification of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. In these two countries, which are at different levels of economic development, the HCT sector accounts for a sizeable share of their GDP at 5.3% for Senegal, and 7.2% for France. The data for this study were collected from 680 HCT students in both countries. Statistical data processing showed that gender has no influence on the entrepreneur identity aspiration of HCT students surveyed in both countries including 279 in France and 401 in Senegal. This result seems to illustrate a paradigm shift among young women who, as much as young men, aspire to endorse an entrepreneur identity. This finding is a break with the assumptions supporting the main trends in female entrepreneurship research.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship education ; Hotel-Catering-Tourism sector ; Entrepreneur identity aspiration ; Gender ; International

### Résumé

L'hôtellerie-restauration-tourisme (HCT) est un secteur important de l'économie dans de nombreux pays, représentant souvent plus de 5% de leur produit intérieur brut (PIB), notamment en France et au Sénégal. Cette recherche examine l'influence du genre sur la motivation des étudiants du secteur HCT à endosser une identité d'entrepreneur en comparant deux pays : la France, une société individualiste où l'économie est « axée sur l'innovation » et le Sénégal, un pays plus collectiviste dont l'économie est 'factor-driven', selon la classification du Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. Dans ces deux pays, qui sont à des niveaux de développement économique différents, le secteur HCT représente une part non négligeable de leur PIB à 5,3 % pour le Sénégal et 7,2 % pour la France. Les données de cette étude ont été recueillies auprès de 680 étudiants HCT dans les deux pays dont 279 en France et 401 au Sénégal. Le traitement des données statistiques a montré que le genre n'a aucune influence sur l'aspiration à l'identité d'entrepreneur des étudiants HCT interrogés dans les deux pays. Ce constat rompt avec les hypothèses qui sous-tendent les grandes tendances de la recherche sur l'entrepreneuriat féminin.

**Mots clés :** Éducation à l'entrepreneuriat ; secteur Hôtellerie-Restauration-Tourisme ; aspiration identitaire de l'entrepreneur ; Genre ; International

## Introduction

An increasing number of entrepreneurship researchers rely on the concept of identity to better understand entrepreneurs during the initial entrepreneurial experience and pre-startup phases (Newbery, *et al.*, 2018), suggesting that entrepreneurship would be a process of identity construction (Ireland & Webb, 2007). Entrepreneurial identity would be a powerful motivational force that could explain why certain individuals choose to engage in an entrepreneurial process (Farmer, *et al.*, 2011).

This research examines entrepreneurial motivation from the entrepreneur identity aspiration perspective (Farmer, *et al.*, 2011). The first studies (Ibarra, 1999), (Farmer, *et al.* 2011) indicate that entrepreneur identity aspiration is an important motivational driver of the entrepreneurial process through the comparison of the possible “self” with the perceived entrepreneurial role. Roles are envisaged as the set of behavioural expectations that are associated with the social positions as those occupied by entrepreneurs, students or professors (Piliavin, *et al.*, 2002). When these behavioural expectations are internalised and adopted as components of the “self”, they become “identities” or “role identities” (McCall & Simmons, 1978). The behavioural expectations associated with role identities are not universal and can vary from culture to culture (Austers, 2002 ; Choi, *et al.*, 1997). Moreover, according to (Stryker, 1987), certain great social categories with which individuals can identify, such as gender or age range, can potentially affect the strength of a role identity, that is to say the possibility that it will be activated in a given situation (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Perpetuating the rare studies on the concept of entrepreneur identity aspiration conducted in entrepreneurship and management, this research examines the influence of gender on entrepreneur identity aspiration in two contrasting contexts, France and Senegal. We seek to answer the following research question: does gender influence the students' entrepreneur identity aspiration, i.e. the strength of their attachment to the role of entrepreneur?

This article is organised into four sections. First, sections 1 and 2 describe the literature review and methodology, respectively. Next, section 3 presents the results. Finally, section 4 tackles the discussion and conclusion.

## 1. Theoretical Background

Firstly we will examine the conceptual foundations of the central theme of our research, entrepreneur identity aspiration, and then we will test the existence of the link between entrepreneur identity aspiration and the social identities of gender, class and nationality.

### 1.1. *The Entrepreneur Identity Aspiration*

Role-based identity, like group-based identity (or social identity), relies on the components of a structured society which comprises of social groups and social roles. Individuals view themselves as members of groups/categories (defining who they are) and as fulfilling the behavioral expectations associated with a social role (defining what they do) (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980). These behavioral expectations define the role-based identity of individuals in a given situation. Role-based identity is established when the meanings and expectations associated with the role are internalized and incorporated into the “self”. They form a set of standards that guide behavior in a given situation (Stryker & Burke, 2000). When these roles, which correspond to a specific position of the individuals in the network of relations, are internalized and adopted as constituent elements of the “self”, they become role identities (McCall & Simmons, 1978).

Psychology and management literature has long been interested in the role of the business owner, which is associated with a series of behavioral expectations in terms of growth, of public success, of commitment to the company and its employees, of social legitimacy, of prosperity or family security (Shepherd & Haynie, 2009). However, even if entrepreneurship is seen sometimes as a process in identity building (Ireland & Webb, 2007), and even is the entrepreneurial activity can be envisaged from the concept of role identity (Hoang & Gimeno, 2000), there exists little work on the subject (Navis & Glynn, 2011). Previous studies have shown that entrepreneurial role identity can be analyzed on three levels: that of the founder (individual level), that of the new venture (organizational level), and that of the sector (market level) (Navis & Glynn, 2011).

Going beyond the question of its definition, researchers have attempted to explain the adoption of the entrepreneur role identity by the personal characteristics of individuals: the existence of parents who were entrepreneurs (Gimeno, *et al.*, 1997), entrepreneurial experience (Carroll & Mosakowski, 1987), or working experience in a small business (Sorensen, 2007). Others have sought to understand the differences in terms of attitude towards the entrepreneur role identity:

sometimes it constitutes a significant part of the “self”, and a powerful motivational force, other time, despite relevant competence and experience, individuals are hardly motivated to handle it (Hoang & Gimeno, 2000).

### ***1.2. Gender and Entrepreneur Identity Aspiration***

In identity theory, there is a hypothesis that social groups created by gender can affect the power of role identity (Stryker, 1987). Roles are social constructions which are specific to a community of individuals who share the same understanding (Callero, *et al.*, 1987). The social identities which stem from the individuals’ belonging to social groups, such as men and women, can potentially modify the understanding that they have of role identity (such as that of an entrepreneur) as well as the engagement they have with it (Wiley, 1991).

Family and professional role identities differ depending on gender, in terms of meaning, obligation and reward (Wiley, 1991). The role of women consists, more than for men, of taking care of others. What is unique for men, it is that their family and professional role identities are equally productive. The role of the “breadwinner” is a traditional facet of a husband and father: a man must work in order to fulfill his family role (Barnett & Baruch, 1985). This dual function for professional success with men, which is supposed to confirm their family and professional identities, can in part explain the intensity of their engagement towards the latter (Wiley, 1991). However, for women, work is often less relevant in their definition of their “self”, and the two types of role identities do not present any correlation.

In entrepreneurial theory, there is also the idea that the entrepreneur identity is influenced by the social identity of gender (Newbery, *et al.*, 2018). Women are less likely to identify with the role of entrepreneur and to engage in entrepreneurial careers due to competence issues, access to resources as well as social and institutional barriers (Kariv, 2013). Lee & Rogoff (1997) *quoted* by Touissate & Azdimousa (2021) admit that women entrepreneurs have less knowledge and less management experience.

The absence of emblematic and successful female entrepreneurs Marlow *et al.*, 2008) and a biased entrepreneurial discourse, largely male orientated (Westhead & Solesvik, 2016), mean that normatively, the “ideal” entrepreneur is a man (Ahl, & Marlow, 2012 ; Henry, *et al.*, 2016), and women lack visible entrepreneurial competences (Marlow & Swail, 2014). These discourses and hypotheses reinforce the stereotypes which can incite women to lower their entrepreneurial aspirations (Steel, *et al.*, 2002) or to conform to the stereotypes (Greene, *et al.*, 2013), which ultimately reduces their entrepreneurial intention (Gupta, *et al.*, 2008; Gupta, *et*

*al.*, 2014). Moreover, the professional and family roles become conflictual during the transition to an entrepreneurial role (Buttner & Moore, 1997; Warren (2004) reports that female entrepreneurs struggle with the term “entrepreneur” and what it implies for their other roles. This struggle becomes obvious when behaviour and the values linked to the role identity of entrepreneurs contradict those associated with their other role identities, i.e. family.

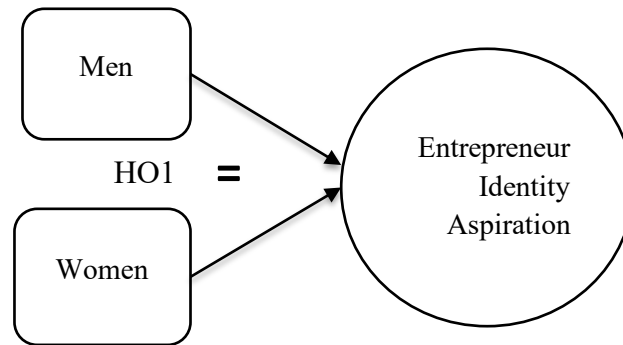
All of this work seems to indicate that women would be less susceptible to identify themselves in the role of an entrepreneur. However, a certain number of elements seem to point in the opposite direction. Gupta et al. (Gupta, *et al.*, 2009) show, in their study undertaken in the United States, in India and in Turkey that, in reality, there is no real difference between men and women regarding entrepreneurial intentions. Identity conflicts concern all individuals who struggle with their new entrepreneur identity, and not just women (Donnellon, *et al.*, 2014). They struggle to find a balance between their need to belong and their need for singularity (Shepherd & Haynie, 2009). They have difficulty managing the personal and social stress generated by their multiple role identities (Donnellon, *et al.*, 2014; Ahl & Marlow (2012) come to the conclusion that the image of the male entrepreneur that one always associates with high performance businesses is myth rather than reality. Moreover, the GEM statistics<sup>1</sup> show that there is a tendency towards a larger presence of women in entrepreneurial careers. Certain countries such as Senegal are at near parity in emerging entrepreneurial activities (according to TEA<sup>2</sup> indicator). Then, more recently, researchers have come to the conclusion that research concentrating on biological comparisons of individuals to explain their entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviour, had reached its limit (Hill, *et al.*, 2006; Henry, *et al.*, 2016). The question of gender is not of a biological nature, but rather social and cultural. Individuals, independently of their biological sex, demonstrate socially developed characteristics that are both male and female (Gupta, *et al.*, 2009). It is therefore absolutely possible to imagine a woman demonstrating socially developed male characteristics, typical of the role of an entrepreneur, independently of her biological sex. This debate leads one to envisage and prefer the following hypothesis corresponding *de facto* to a paradigm reversal:

There should be no difference in terms of entrepreneur identity aspiration between men and women.

<sup>1</sup> For more information see <https://www.gemconsortium.org/>

<sup>2</sup> The Total Early Stage Entrepreneurial activity (TEA) measures the percentage of the 18-64 population who are either a nascent entrepreneur or owner-manager of a new business.

**Figure 1: Research model**



## 2. Methodology

The population targeted is that of students enrolled in higher education (BTS, Masters) in the HCT in institutions in France and in Senegal. We compare these two countries because France, an individualistic society where the economy is innovation-driven and Senegal, a more collectivist country whose economy is factor-driven, according to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor classification.

In France, a questionnaire was distributed via the Google Form platform to 279 students following a Bachelor programme in Gastronomy & Hospitality at Ferrandi School in Paris, during February 2018. Parallel to this, the same questionnaire was distributed in paper form between February and June 2018 to 401 students in HCT higher education programmes of 4 institutions in Senegal: Ziguinchor Assane Seck University, St-Louis Gaston Berger University, Thiès University and the Ecole Nationale de Formation Hôtelière et Touristique Cheikh Amal Sy of Dakar. All these institutions propose, at various times in their curricula in HCT, courses in business creation (BTS for ENFHT, Bachelors for Ferrandi in Paris and Thiès, and Masters for Ziguinchor and St-Louis). We have chosen 4 institutions in Senegal and only one in France because according to the GEM reports, the entrepreneurial intention rate is 66.6% in Senegal, and it is only 15.6% in France. Entrepreneurial intention which involves the perception of desirability and feasibility of entrepreneurial action, is one of the most important behavioral factors in explaining new venture creation (Harouna, 2020). This study is based exclusively on the non-probability statistical method and more specifically on the technique of convenience sampling. This technique is often used in surveys with students as respondents.

The entrepreneur identity aspiration is measured with a scale developed by Farmer, et al. (2011). It is the adaptation of a scale of 3 items which were created in 2003 by Farmer et al.

(Farmer *et al.*, 2003). These two scales were developed from the original scale by Callero (1985) that was validated during empirical studies in social psychology (Callero, *et al.*, 1987; Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Callero, 1992). The scale evaluates to what extent the entrepreneur identity aspiration is perceived as being part of individuals' concept of "self". It evaluates the strength or (the 'salience') of the aspiring role identity.

It consists of the five following items and measured on a 7-point Likert scale:

- (1) I often think of becoming an entrepreneur (variable EIA1)
- (2) I would like to see myself as an entrepreneur (variable EIA2)
- (3) Becoming an entrepreneur would be an important part of who I am (variable EIA3)
- (4) When I think about it the term 'entrepreneur' would suit me (variable EIA4)
- (5) It is important for me to express my entrepreneurial aspirations (variable EIA5).

For gender, the respondents must tick their gender: (Male; Female). Nationality has been approximated based on the country of residence of the respondent. We used the programme SPSS (IBM Corp., 2016) for the descriptive statistics (average, standard deviation), to measure the psychometric quality of the variables (Cronbach's Alpha) and for the testing of the research hypothesis (difference test of two averages by ANOVA).

### 3. Results

Table 1 indicates the composition of the final sample by gender and by nationality.

**Table N°1 : Composition of the final sample by gender and by nationality**

		NATIONALITY		Total
		France	Senegal	
GENDER	Male	141	230	371
	Female	138	171	309
		279	401	680

Source : Authors

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics (average, standard deviation, minimum and maximum) of the variables measuring entrepreneur identity aspiration. The five different



variables (EIA1, EIA2, EIA3, EIA4 and EIA5) are spaced from 1 to 7 and present an average of 6, as well as dispersion (standard deviation) between 1.333 and 1.640.

**Table N°2: Descriptive statistics**

	EIA1	EIA2	EIA3	EIA4	EIA5
N	680	680	680	680	680
Average	5.92	6.04	5.77	5.63	5.61
Standard	1.443	1.333	1.443	1.477	1.640
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum	7	7	7	7	7

Source : Authors

**Table N°3 : Correlations**

	EIA1	EIA2	EIA3	EIA4	EIA5
EIA1 Pearson Correlation	1	0.819**	0.683**	0.635**	0.260**
Sig. (bilateral)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	680	680	680	680	680
EIA2 Pearson Correlation	0.819**	1	0.709**	0.621**	0.247**
Sig. (bilateral)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
N	680	680	680	680	680
EIA3 Pearson Correlation	0.683**	0.709**	1	0.719**	0.269**
Sig. (bilateral)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
N	680	680	680	680	680
EIA4 Pearson Correlation	0.635**	0.621**	0.719**	1	0.350**
Sig. (bilateral)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
N	680	680	680	680	680
EIA5 Pearson Correlation	0.260**	0.247**	0.269**	0.350**	1
Sig. (bilateral)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
N	680	680	680	680	680

\*\* . The correlation is significant at a level of 0.01 (bilateral).

Source : Authors

Table 3 presents the correlation coefficients of the five variables measuring entrepreneur identity aspiration. The correlations between the five variables are all significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 4 presents the results of the reliability of the entrepreneur identity aspiration measuring scale evaluated by Cronbach's Alpha. Alpha's value (0.841) is superior to the required limit of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978).

**Table N°4 : Reliability (Cronbach's alpha)**

Scales	Cronbach's
EIA1 - EIA2 - EIA3 - EIA4 -	0.841

Source : Authors

Table 5 presents the results of the research hypothesis test (H1). We can see that there is no significant statistical difference between the averages of men and women ( $p=0.385>0.05$ ).

**Table N°5 : Test of means difference (ANOVA)**

	Sum of	df	Mean	F	Sig.
Intergroupes	0.997	1	0.997	0.754	0.385
Intragroupes	895.864	678	1.321		
Total	896.861	679			

Source : Authors

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The research sought to better understand future business creators in the first entrepreneurial phases, through a concept, which until now had seen little work, that of the entrepreneur identity aspiration. Starting with the analysis of the concept in the literature of social psychology and entrepreneurship, it raised the question of understanding to what extent gender could influence the entrepreneur aspirational role identity. In order to reply, an examination of the theoretical foundation of the concept was undertaken, followed by an empirical evaluation in two contrasting contexts (France and Senegal).

The quantitative methodology selected allowed for the collection of data from a questionnaire distributed to 680 students enrolled in HCT higher education programmes in the two countries. The statistical analysis of the data showed finally that women and men show no differences in this domain.

From a theoretical stand point, the research provided a different perspective for the motivations that can inspire the desire to create a business in the first entrepreneurial phase. It completes a series of studies on the subject: Those concerning the expected results by future entrepreneurs to satisfy the need for autonomy, financial success or personal accomplishment, and those concerning opportunity or necessity entrepreneurship (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011).

More specifically, it furthered the entrepreneurial work initiated by Farmer, Yao and Kung-McIntyre in 2011 on the formulation of the concept of entrepreneur identity aspiration. Finally, it pursued those lead by Gupta and York (Gupta & York, 2008) on the link between the

geographical context and the attitude towards entrepreneurship as well as those, numerous, researching the specifics of female entrepreneurship.

From a methodology point of view, the research furthered the previous work on entrepreneurship, undertaken by Farmer (2011), Yao and Kung-McIntyre (2011), in particular the operationalization of the concept of entrepreneur identity aspiration.

And from a practical point of view, the results of the research present a real operational potential as part of the training and the support for entrepreneurship.

This research also has some limitations because the study population is composed exclusively of students engaged in higher education in Hospitality, Catering and Tourism. For research avenues, it would also be interesting to supplement the quantitative approach with a qualitative approach, for example in the context of a mixed method.

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