

## Exploring External Influences on Women's Entrepreneurial Intention: Evidence from Women-Owned Restaurant Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in Northeastern Thailand

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### ABSTRACT

**Background and Objectives:** Despite the increasing presence of female restaurant entrepreneurs in Northeastern Thailand, many continue to face significant obstacles that threaten their survival. The regional Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) growth rate remains weak, and the high turnover rate among female entrepreneurs stems primarily from limited financial resources, limited access to credit, and insufficient managerial skills. Existing research has not adequately examined external determinants influencing women's entrepreneurial intentions, such as access to capital, materials, and labor; opportunities for experiential learning; advances in technology that enhance operational efficiency; and government support, including regulatory guidance and financial assistance. This study investigates how these elements shape the entrepreneurial decision-making of women in the Northeastern region. The results will guide policy formulation and facilitate initiatives to foster sustainable long-term growth of women-owned SMEs in the region.

**Methodology:** A quantitative survey design with stratified sampling was employed. The sample consisted of 259 female entrepreneurs operating small and medium-sized enterprise restaurants across 20 Northeastern provinces. Data collection captured demographic and business characteristics. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent profiles, while inferential statistics tested the research hypotheses. Multiple Regression Analysis examined the effects of resource availability, learning experience, technological advancement, and government support on entrepreneurial intention.

**Results:** Resource readiness, including access to capital, quality raw materials, and skilled labor showed a strong positive influence on entrepreneurial intention ( $p < 0.05$ ). Adequate resources increased confidence in starting and expanding a business while reducing operational risks. Learning experiences derived from practical work and training also had a significant effect ( $p < 0.05$ ), emphasizing the value of experiential knowledge in informed

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decision-making. Technological advancement, particularly the use of online sales platforms and social media marketing, enhanced efficiency and expanded customer reach ( $p < 0.05$ ). By contrast, government support was not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that existing programs may not effectively meet entrepreneurs' needs or may be difficult to access and utilize.

**Discussions:** The findings highlight that resource readiness and learning experience are central to fostering entrepreneurial intentions among female restaurateurs. Access to necessary resources lowers entry barriers and strengthens competitiveness, while experiential learning enables entrepreneurs to adapt to shifting market conditions. Technology adoption further supports entrepreneurial intention by improving operations, marketing, and customer engagement factors essential for SMEs in highly competitive environments. The absence of significant impact from government support suggests that policies may be misaligned with real challenges or insufficiently implemented. A significant number of female entrepreneurs continue to rely on personal resources or local networks instead of structured government assistance.

**Conclusions:** This study indicates that entrepreneurs should prioritize self-development by cultivating resources, accumulating experience, and applying technology to improve their competitiveness. Insufficient government support indicates that current approaches do not adequately address the genuine needs of these businesses. Policymakers should enhance support strategies to make them more targeted, including offering microfinance options tailored to the restaurant sector, delivering digital skills training specifically for female entrepreneurs, and establishing business networks that reflect industry characteristics.

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## Introduction

In the contemporary global landscape, women entrepreneurs have increasingly become a vital mechanism for driving inclusive economic growth and social development, serving as key agents in promoting innovation and reducing wealth inequality across both developing and developed economies (Estrin & Mickiewicz, 2011; Sosanidze, 2024). Their contributions are particularly prominent within the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) sector, which is widely

recognized as the “backbone” of national economies worldwide. SMEs play a critical role in generating employment opportunities and stimulating local economic dynamism.

Within the Asia-Pacific region, the growth of SMEs serves as a primary catalyst for national economic advancement. In Thailand, SMEs constitute a fundamental mechanism driving job creation and community-based economic development (Panphae et al., 2024). In particular, the restaurant SME sector in the Northeastern region has experienced rapid expansion, with women entrepreneurs continuously playing a pivotal role in fostering business development and career stability (Alhakimi & Albashiri, 2023). Nevertheless, these entrepreneurs confront several persistent structural challenges, including financial constraints, restricted access to capital, and insufficient managerial or technical competencies (Phillips et al., 2014; Tongdaeng & Mahakanjana, 2022). Empirical evidence from key economic hubs in the region, such as Khon Kaen and Nakhon Ratchasima, reveals that local female-led restaurant startups frequently suffer premature closure within their first two years of operation, primarily due to sudden supply chain disruptions and unforeseen overhead spikes. Structurally, female entrepreneurs within this distinct socio-economic framework differ substantially from their male counterparts. They are often compelled to balance socio-cultural domestic caregiving responsibilities with daily business operations, while simultaneously facing documented implicit biases when attempting to secure institutional commercial credit. Consequently, their reliance on external environmental readiness factors is uniquely critical compared to male-owned. According to data from the Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion, although the Northeastern region exhibits a relatively high rate of new business formation, the overall SME growth rate remains slower than in other regions of the country. Moreover, the business closure rate among women-owned restaurants significantly exceeds the national average. This disparity underscores an urgent imperative to examine both internal and external determinants such as resource readiness, learning experiences, technological adoption, and governmental support. These factors fundamentally shape entrepreneurial intention among women entrepreneurs, who represent a vital yet highly vulnerable segment of the Thai economy.

The decision to engage in entrepreneurial activity is often explained through the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that an individual’s entrepreneurial intention is directly influenced by attitude, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms (Ajzen, 1991; Chittithaworn et al., 2011). While TPB provides a robust and widely accepted psychological framework, existing studies remain insufficient in explaining how context-specific and external environmental factors influence women’s entrepreneurial intentions within the SME sector, particularly in Northeastern Thailand, a region characterized by economic vulnerability and resource constraints. This study fills the existing research gap by contextualizing the TBP alongside the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) within the specific context of Northeastern Thailand. This region serves as a distinct peripheral environment characterized by severe structural resource constraints, lower provincial gross regional product (GRP), and unique social networks.

To achieve this, the article explicitly extends the traditional TPB framework to incorporate external contextual and environmental factors. Rather than treating internal psychological constructs as mediators, this study conceptualizes these context-specific external dimensions directly as environmental precursors that actively shape and drive entrepreneurial intention (EI)

within a resource-constrained regional ecosystem. The present study focuses on four critical external dimensions: (1) Resource readiness (RR) encompasses capital, materials, equipment, and labor. It constitutes a foundational determinant of a firm's capacity to initiate and sustain business operations effectively. Efficient management and utilization of these resources enhance sustainability and competitiveness, aligning with the TPB construct of perceived behavioral control (Pingali et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2022). (2) Learning experiences (LE) play a pivotal role in strengthening entrepreneurial competence and self-efficacy. Workplace training and experiential learning facilitate managerial skill development and adaptability in rapidly changing business environments (Huang et al., 2025). (3) Technological advancement (TA) significantly contributes to operational efficiency. The integration of digital tools in management, marketing, and sales processes enhances business performance and expands growth opportunities (Adebayo et al., 2024; Kiatsangsilp & Pankham, 2025). (4) Governmental support (GS) remains an essential element in fostering SME stability. However, previous research highlights a persistent policy gap, whereby government support through funding, cooperative networks, or infrastructure (Ounarat et al., 2019; Qiong & Premaratna, 2025) often fails to yield tangible outcomes in practice. Many entrepreneurs continue to rely more on personal or local networks than on formal government mechanisms, revealing a misalignment between structural policy design and on-ground implementation, an issue that warrants further empirical investigation.

Therefore, this study is significant in examining the characteristics that affect entrepreneurial tendencies among women in SME restaurants in the Northeastern region. It analyzes the influence of resource readiness, learning experiences, technological advancement, and governmental assistance on the long-term decision to initiate and expand a firm. This study will offer comprehensive insights into the determinants of entrepreneurial intention, which may inform the formulation of policies and guidelines to assist SME entrepreneurs, especially women in this region. The aim of this study is to investigate how resource readiness, learning experiences, technological advancement, and government support affect the entrepreneurial intention of female SME restaurateurs.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Resource Readiness (RR)**

Resource readiness refers to the entrepreneur's capacity to procure and leverage the essential resources required for business operations. This encompasses financial capital, specialized expertise, technical skills, professional networks, and relevant raw materials. Prior research posits that entrepreneurs with adequate resource endowments are significantly more likely to successfully launch and sustain an enterprise, as this mitigates risk and enhances competitive potential (Barney, 1991). Moreover, the sufficiency of resources helps foster self-confidence and motivation for new venture creation. Numerous studies confirm that both financial and non-financial resources (e.g., business knowledge and collaborative networks) directly influence entrepreneurial ambition and intention, particularly among women (Franzke et al., 2022). Furthermore, the

entrepreneur's existing experience and knowledge are considered crucial resources that boost self-assurance and promote the decision to initiate a new business (Tian et al., 2022).

In the specific context of Thailand, particularly within the SME restaurant sector, access to working capital, high-quality raw materials, and familial support are critical determinants influencing the decision to start a business. Concurrently, institutional factors, such as educational support and commercial infrastructure, also function as resources that enhance the capacity to identify and capitalize on market opportunities (Wannamakok & Yonwikai, 2023). However, empirical evidence consistently indicates that many women entrepreneurs still encounter significant challenges in accessing financing sources, establishing business networks, and obtaining professional training. Consequently, resource accessibility remains a substantial impediment to development (Sukphan & Satjasomboon, 2023). Therefore, integrating this with the TBP, adequate resource endowment serves as a critical environmental antecedent that directly elevates an individual's perceived behavioral control (PBC). When female entrepreneurs perceive that they possess a high level of resource readiness, it mitigates operational risks, reduces the fear of business failure, and fosters self-efficacy. Consequently, this heightened perception of capability and control acts as a powerful motivational driver that translates potential into entrepreneurial intent to start or expand a venture. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Resource readiness positively influences entrepreneurial intention.

### **Learning Experience (LE)**

Learning experience refers to the process of acquiring and developing knowledge, understanding, and skills through encountering real-world events and past experiences. This encompasses practical fieldwork, problem-solving, participation in training and skill development programs, as well as collaborative work. This concept aligns with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) (Kolb, 2014), which explains that learning occurs through a four-stage cycle: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation. This cyclical process enables individuals to transform experience into new knowledge that is applicable within real business contexts (Huang et al., 2025). Prior research indicates that experiential learning is a crucial mechanism for developing critical thinking capacity, resilience, and adaptability to change. This corroborates Kolb's view that learning through experience fosters both cognitive growth and behavioral adaptability, which are essential skills for entrepreneurs (Huang et al., 2025). For SME entrepreneurs, particularly within the restaurant industry, direct experience from customer service, on-the-spot problem resolution, and internal operational management constitutes an invaluable learning resource. Yiğit's (2025) work reveals that women entrepreneurs in the food and beverage industry utilize real-world experience as a primary driver for developing business strategies and making innovative decisions. Furthermore, empirical studies confirm that experiential resources and the establishment of business networks significantly bolster occupational stability and increase women's business commitment.

In the Thai context, research by Sukphan and Satjasomboon (2023) found that women entrepreneurs, especially in the food and beverage sector, continue to face limitations in accessing systematic managerial skill development and business networking opportunities, despite their

potential for learning from practical experience. From the perspective of ELT, practical learning and reflection are processes that can enhance self-confidence and perceived behavioral control (PBC), a critical antecedent of entrepreneurial intention, as conceptualized by Ajzen (1991). Therefore, the logical connection between LE to EI lies within the transformation of experiential knowledge into entrepreneurial competence. For female restaurateurs, hands-on experience in customer service, kitchen operations, and crisis management allows them to internalize tacit knowledge. From the TPB perspective, this accumulated experiential learning directly reinforces their PBC and shapes a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship. By reflecting on past triumphs and failures, entrepreneurs cultivate cognitive resilience and problem-solving skills, which significantly enhance their self-confidence in managing a new or expanded business. Consequently, it is hypothesized that:

H2: Learning experience positively influences entrepreneurial intention.

### **Technological Advancement (TA)**

Technological advancement refers to the development and dissemination of digital innovations and technological tools that enhance organizational efficiency across various domains, such as production, management, and customer service delivery. Rapidly evolving technologies such as online communication systems, digital platforms, electronic payment systems, and social media marketing have become a crucial set of components for bolstering the competitive capability of SMEs (Kiatsangsilp & Pankham, 2025). Previous research demonstrates that the application of modern technology can significantly increase the efficiency of resource management and expand access to new markets. This perspective is consistent with Barney's (1991) Resource-Based View (RBV), which posits that technology serves as a strategic resource that creates a sustainable competitive advantage for entrepreneurs. Furthermore, technology adoption at the entrepreneurial level can be explained by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which suggests that perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) influence the intention to apply technology in business operations.

For entrepreneurs, technology plays a critical role in mitigating constraints related to capital, business networks, and market access. Particularly in the highly competitive restaurant industry, the utilization of digital technology, such as online ordering systems and social media marketing, enables businesses to differentiate themselves from competitors and efficiently expand their customer base (Ditta-Apichai et al., 2020; Kattiyapornpong et al., 2022). Moreover, in the Thai context, while many women entrepreneurs continue to face systemic obstacles in accessing resources and support, technology has emerged as a "new avenue" that helps circumvent these limitations. It significantly creates opportunities for learning, accessing business intelligence, and fostering economic development at the individual and community levels. However, research in Thailand focusing on the role of technology for women entrepreneurs in the restaurant business, particularly in the Northeast, is limited. This highlights a contextual gap that needs further study to understand the impact of technology on entrepreneurial intention within this group. Digital platforms facilitate market access and reduce geographical barriers. When women entrepreneurs realize that digital tools can optimize costs and expand customer reach effectively, their evaluations of business

opportunities improve. Under the TPB framework, this positive attitude shift, coupled with reduced barriers to market entry caused by technology, directly stimulates stronger entrepreneurial intentions. Consequently, it is hypothesized that

H3: Technology advancement positively influences entrepreneurial intention.

### **Government Support (GS)**

Governmental support serves as an institutional catalyst that alters an entrepreneur's external risk perception and institutional legitimacy (Prasannath et al., 2024; Qiong & Premaratna, 2025). By establishing strategic regulatory pathways, financial subsidies, and targeted capacity-building workshops, state frameworks can effectively lower market entry barriers for marginalized groups (Phillips et al., 2014). Financial support, acting as the government's budgetary mechanism, aims to assist, promote, and revitalize enterprises through measures such as tax reduction, subsidies, and credit allocation, ensuring continuous operation and stability. Non-financial support, conversely, facilitates entrepreneurs' access to modern productive resources and promotes training to enhance knowledge and skills requisite for market competition. This includes supporting infrastructure development, fostering inter-agency collaboration, promoting innovation, developing distribution networks, and offering practical training workshops.

Governmental support plays a crucial role in promoting entrepreneurial intention (EI) by mitigating constraints and creating business incentives. Financial measures and credit access for SMEs help reduce financial barriers and strengthen PBC, a key construct of Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, consequently increasing entrepreneurs' confidence in launching a business. Furthermore, training, consultation, and management knowledge development programs bolster the motivation and confidence of SME entrepreneurs, particularly during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where governmental support helped small businesses adapt and sustain operations (Prasannath et al., 2024). Previous research indicates that government assistance programs, such as working capital and digital skills training, help reduce social barriers and increase resource access, directly impacting entrepreneurial motivation and intention (Phillips et al., 2014; Qiong & Premaratna, 2025). In the Thai context, institutional support, such as promoting education and service business infrastructure, has been found to correlate positively with the business objectives of entrepreneurs in the service and tourism industries (Wannamakok & Yonwikai, 2023). However, a geographical research gap persists, particularly in the Northeast region, where women entrepreneurs in the SME restaurant sector face unequal opportunities in accessing support compared to other regions. Theoretically, institutional support plays a pivotal role in shaping both PBC and subjective norms within the TPB framework. Formal government backing provides structural legitimacy and institutional stability, which signals a welcoming ecosystem for new firms. By offering micro-finance options and reducing bureaucratic hurdles, government initiatives reduce the exogenous risks faced by vulnerable segments, particularly female entrepreneurs in marginalized regions like Northeastern Thailand. When entrepreneurs feel backed by robust institutional frameworks, their societal validation (subjective norm) and internal confidence (PBC) increase, thereby fostering a stronger inclination toward venture creation and business expansion. Consequently, it is hypothesized that

H4: Government support positively influences entrepreneurial intention.

### **Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)**

Entrepreneurial intention represents the conscious cognitive state directing an individual's specific decisions toward setting up a new venture (Ajzen, 1991). Within contemporary literature, this intention acts as the primary antecedent to actual behavioral execution, heavily mediated by the individual's direct environmental interactions and perceived operational stability (Nwibe & Ogbuanya, 2024). Connecting this conceptual framework to the factors under investigation reveals the following hypothesized mechanisms: Resource readiness and learning experiences primarily function to reinforce PBC by mitigating risk, enhancing skills, and boosting self-confidence. Technological advancement is hypothesized to foster a positive attitude toward business initiation. Government support is theoretically expected to establish subjective norms by providing legitimacy and stability to entrepreneurs.

However, while traditional theory outlines clear mechanisms of intention, prior empirical research indicates a significant discrepancy between formal government support policies and their actual implementation at the local level. This misalignment is particularly evident in the Northeastern region of Thailand, where a substantial number of women entrepreneurs rely more heavily on informal private networks than on formal state channels. This empirical contradiction represents the critical knowledge gap that the present study aims to address. Grounded in this conceptual expansion, this research utilizes the core ethos of the TBP but adapts its framework to evaluate the direct impact of contextual and environmental factors. In this adapted framework, resource readiness, learning experiences, technological advancement, and government support function directly as critical external precursors to entrepreneurial intention.

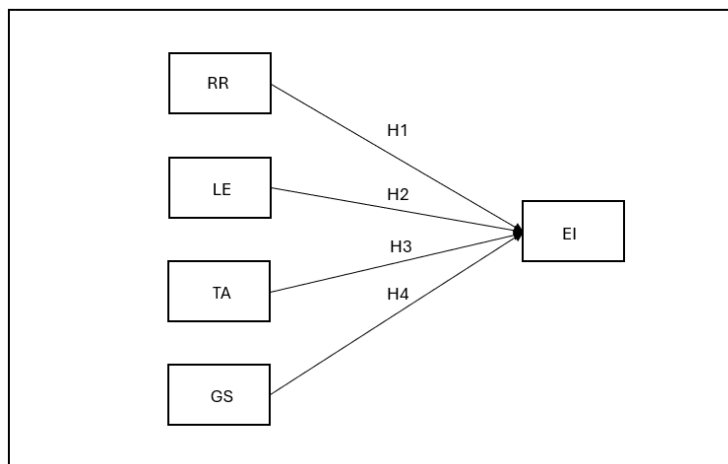
By deliberately eschewing internal psychological constructs such as attitude, subjective norms, and PBC as explicit mediating variables, this study directly links these operationalized environmental forces to EI. This approach allows the research to empirically evaluate how tangible regional constraints and opportunities directly dictate entrepreneurial intention and develop a business among women entrepreneurs in the Northeast. Consequently, the primary objectives of this study are to analyze the causal mechanisms between the four antecedent factors and EI, and to critically evaluate the actual effectiveness of government support. Ultimately, these findings aim to inform the formulation of targeted policies that truly and effectively empower women's entrepreneurship in sustainable alignment with the local socio-economic context.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Based on the preceding discussion, the research hypotheses along with the proposed model are formulated and illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Research Hypotheses and Proposed Model*



*Note.* RR = resource readiness, LE = learning experience, TA = technology advancement, GS = government support, EI = entrepreneurial intention

## Research Methods

This study employed a quantitative research approach to investigate the correlation between resource readiness, learning experiences, technology advancement, government support, and entrepreneurial intention among female SME entrepreneurs in Thailand's restaurant sector. All research procedures, including the development of the survey instrument and data collection protocol, were conducted in accordance with ethical standards for human subjects. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Suranaree University of Technology (SUT) prior to data collection, ensuring the rights, privacy, and well-being of all participants were protected throughout the research process.

## Data Collection

According to the official registry maintained by the Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion, the total registered population of female-operated SME restaurants across the 20 provinces of Northeastern Thailand stood at approximately 5,238 active establishments. This quantitative research employed a survey methodology utilizing a multi-stage purposive sampling technique with regional stratification. Initially, the target population was stratified across the 20 provinces in Thailand's Northeast region to ensure comprehensive geographical representation. Within each province, a purposive selection was conducted targeting women entrepreneurs who were either the sole owners or primary operators, thereby ensuring that the respondents possessed the requisite expertise to address the research questions. The minimum required sample size for multiple regression analysis, based on Cohen criteria (significance level of 0.05 and statistical power of 0.80 for four independent variables), was calculated to be  $N = 80$ . To minimize potential non-response bias, maximize standard error buffers, and guarantee sufficient geographical cell sizes

across all strata, a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed (proportionately allocated based on each province's population density). This yielded 259 usable questionnaires, resulting in a high response rate of 64%. Data collection was conducted between January and March 2025, employing a mixed distribution strategy. The primary method involved mailing questionnaires to remote areas, while some portions utilized a drop-off/pick-up (DOPU) method, which helped maximize accessibility to the target population. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation, and the confidentiality and secure storage of their data were guaranteed. The detailed distribution of respondents across 20 provinces is explicitly structured in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Detailed Distribution of Respondents Across 20 Provinces*

| <b>Province</b>   | <b>Population (SMEs)<br/>(n = 5,238)</b> | <b>Usable Responses<br/>(n = 259)</b> |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Nakhon Ratchasima | 725                                      | 36                                    |
| Khon Kaen         | 620                                      | 31                                    |
| Ubon Ratchathani  | 480                                      | 24                                    |
| Udon Thani        | 440                                      | 22                                    |
| Buriram           | 380                                      | 19                                    |
| Srisaket          | 310                                      | 15                                    |
| Surin             | 295                                      | 15                                    |
| Roi Et            | 280                                      | 14                                    |
| Chaiyaphum        | 250                                      | 12                                    |
| Sakon Nakhon      | 230                                      | 12                                    |
| Maha Sarakham     | 210                                      | 10                                    |
| Kalasin           | 190                                      | 9                                     |
| Nong Khai         | 160                                      | 8                                     |
| Loei              | 150                                      | 7                                     |
| Nakhon Phanom     | 140                                      | 7                                     |
| Yasothon          | 110                                      | 5                                     |
| Amnat Charoen     | 90                                       | 5                                     |
| Nong Bua Lamphu   | 80                                       | 4                                     |
| Bueng Kan         | 70                                       | 3                                     |
| Mukdahan          | 68                                       | 3                                     |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>5,238</b>                             | <b>259</b>                            |

## Variables and Measures

This research utilized a structured questionnaire for data collection from women SME restaurant operators, comprising six sections. Section 1 gathered demographic information. Sections 2 through 6 measured the study's core constructs. The measurement scales were adapted from verified academic sources: resource readiness was operationalized using 5 items adapted from Yang et al. (2022); learning experiences utilized 5 items from Huang et al. (2025); technological advancement contained 5 items adapted from Pingali et al. (2023); government support incorporated 6 items from Prasannath et al. (2024); and entrepreneurial intention was measured via a 5-item scale adapted from Nwibe and Ogbuanya (2024). A 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 5 = "Strongly Agree") was used to measure the respondents' perceptions. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by five subject-matter experts. This validation process resulted in a content validity index (CVI), specifically the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), ranging from 0.80 to 1.00 for all items, which significantly exceeds the established threshold of 0.50. Furthermore, the internal consistency of the instrument was confirmed through reliability analysis. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all constructs ranged from 0.844 to 0.913, thereby surpassing the standard benchmark of 0.70. However, to ensure the rigorous psychological properties required for empirical research of publishable quality, structural validity and reliability were assessed in addition to Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Combined reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated using standard factor weighting coefficients. CR values for all structures ranged from 0.809 to 0.915, exceeding the recommended benchmark of 0.70. AVE values ranged from 0.552 to 0.943, exceeding the set benchmark of 0.50, demonstrating strong convergence validity. Furthermore, discriminant validity was confirmed via the Fornell-Larcker criterion, as the square root of the AVE for each structure was greater than the correlation coefficient between any shared structures.

## Data Analysis

The dataset, comprising 259 responses, was meticulously prepared and screened for quality prior to analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis proceeded in two primary stages: (1) descriptive statistics, including frequency analysis, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents (e.g., age, education level, income, and employee count) and to describe the central tendencies of all measured variables; and (2) inferential statistics were utilized to formally evaluate the research hypotheses. Specifically, multiple regression analysis was employed to investigate the predictive impact of resource readiness, learning experience, technological advancement, and government support on entrepreneurial intention. All hypothesis testing was conducted using a predetermined significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ , where a p-value less than this threshold was interpreted as a statistically significant effect. Further, to investigate common method bias (CMB) issues, this research used Harman's single-factor test. All indicators of each variable were subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal component analysis. The results showed that the first extracted factor explained 26.51% of the total variance, which is within 50% of the limit according to Podsakoff et al. (2003). This demonstrates that the data in this research does not suffer from serious common method bias and can be used for further analysis.

## Findings

### Descriptive Statistics

This study examined the demographic attributes of the respondents, encompassing age, educational attainment, average monthly income, duration of business operation, and personnel count. The results indicated diverse demographic characteristics among the respondents: the predominant age group was 20 to 30 years old (41.30%), followed by individuals aged 31 to 40 (35.50%), those over 40 years old (22.80%), and finally, those under 20 years old (0.40%). The predominant level of education among respondents was a bachelor's degree, held by 60.20%, followed by individuals with less than a bachelor's degree at 29.00%, and those with more than a bachelor's degree at 10.80%. The respondents' average monthly income revealed that the majority (31.30%) earned less than 30,000 baht, followed by 26.60% earning between 30,000 and 50,000 baht, another 26.60% earning over 70,000 baht, and 12.00% earning between 50,001 and 70,000 baht. Regarding business longevity, the majority had operated for over 5 years (32.00%), followed by those with less than 2 years (29.00%), then those in business for 2 to 3 years (26.30%), and finally, those with 4 to 5 years of experience (12.70%). Regarding employee count, 84.60% of respondents employed fewer than 10 individuals, followed by 10.80% employing 10–20 employees, 1.90% employing 21–30 employees, and 2.70% employing more than 30 employees. The study's results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

| Variable               | Category                | Frequency | %    |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|------|
| Age                    | Under 20                | 1         | 0.4  |
|                        | 20-30                   | 107       | 41.3 |
|                        | 31-41                   | 92        | 35.5 |
|                        | More than 40            | 59        | 22.8 |
| Level of education     | Below bachelor's degree | 75        | 29.0 |
|                        | Bachelor's Degree       | 156       | 60.2 |
|                        | Above bachelor's degree | 28        | 10.8 |
| Average monthly income | Under 30,000            | 81        | 31.3 |
|                        | 30,000 – 50,000         | 78        | 30.1 |
|                        | 50,001 – 70,000         | 31        | 12.0 |

**Table 2***(Cont.)*

| Variable            | Category          | Frequency | %    |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------|------|
| Processing time     | More than 70,000  | 69        | 26.6 |
|                     | Under 2 years     | 75        | 29.0 |
|                     | 2 – 3 years       | 68        | 26.3 |
|                     | 4 – 5 years       | 33        | 12.7 |
|                     | More than 5 years | 83        | 32.0 |
| Number of employees | Under 10          | 219       | 84.6 |
|                     | 10 – 20           | 28        | 10.8 |
|                     | 21 – 30           | 5         | 1.9  |
|                     | More than 30      | 7         | 2.7  |

The demographic characteristics of the 259 female SME restaurant operators surveyed were analyzed based on age, educational attainment, monthly income, business tenure, and number of employees. The analysis results indicate that the majority of the sample consists of a younger, highly educated cohort of women entrepreneurs. Specifically, 76.80% of the respondents fall within the age range of 20–40 years, and over 60% possess an educational background of a bachelor's degree or higher. This finding reflects a continuous increase in the proportion of highly educated women engaging in the region's food service sector. In terms of business structure, the majority of the enterprises align with the definition of SMEs in Thailand, with a substantial 84.60% employing 10 staff members or fewer. Notably, based on the employee count and revenue distribution, the sampled firms appear to be primarily micro-enterprises. While technically falling under the broader SME umbrella category according to national criteria, their extremely small scale introduces a structural limitation, meaning the results may more accurately reflect the dynamics of micro-level operations rather than medium or larger small enterprises within the sector. While the businesses exhibit diversity in their operational tenure, 32.00% have been operating for more than five years, whereas 29.00% are new ventures with an operational duration of less than two years. This distribution underscores the dynamic nature of the Northeast region's restaurant industry, characterized by high fluidity and a relatively high rate of entrepreneurial entry and exit.

### **Inferential Statistics**

#### ***Analysis of Correlation Coefficients and Variance Inflation Factor Values of Variables***

Multiple regression analysis necessitates the evaluation of the interrelationships among independent variables to avert multicollinearity. This study assessed the means, standard

deviations, and interrelationships of the variables employing the Pearson correlation coefficient and evaluated the VIF values. The results of the study found that: EI had a very high mean level (mean = 4.397, S.D 0.381), RR had a very high mean level (mean = 4.451, S.D 0.536), LE had a very high mean level (mean = 4.538, SD 0.504), TA had a very high mean level (mean = 4.624, S.D 0.472), and GS had a high mean level (mean = 3.992, S.D 0.945) considering the mean interpretation criteria (3.41–4.20 = high, 4.21–5.00 = very high; Best, 1977) The assessment of multicollinearity utilizing the variance inflation factor (VIF) yielded values ranging from 1.187 to 1.488 (with tolerance values between 0.672 and 0.842). These values are distinctly below the maximum acceptable threshold of 10, indicating that the independent variables exhibit sufficient independence for appropriate use in the subsequent multiple regression analysis.

However, the Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated that EI is positively and statistically significantly correlated ( $p < 0.01$ ) with all four independent variables. Specifically, LE showed the highest correlation ( $r = 0.612$ ), closely followed by RR ( $r = 0.610$ ), suggesting that internal capabilities and resource readiness are the most potent correlates of entrepreneurial intention. Conversely, TA ( $r = 0.426$ ) exhibited a moderate level of correlation, and GS ( $r = 0.305$ ) maintained a positive but lower strength correlation compared to the other variables. These results collectively indicate that the surveyed women entrepreneurs possess positive attitudes and confidence regarding the leverage of their internal resources spanning technology, learning, and tangible resources to drive business growth, even as the evaluation of external support, particularly from the government, is perceived at a comparatively lower level. The study's results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics, Correlation, VIF*

| Constructs | Mean  | SD    | 1       | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5 | Tolerance | VIF   |
|------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---|-----------|-------|
| 1. EI      | 4.397 | 0.381 | 1       |         |         |         |   |           |       |
| 2. RR      | 4.451 | 0.536 | 0.610** | 1       |         |         |   | 0.722     | 1.386 |
| 3. LE      | 4.538 | 0.504 | 0.612** | 0.490** | 1       |         |   | 0.672     | 1.487 |
| 4. TA      | 4.624 | 0.472 | 0.426** | 0.352** | 0.395** | 1       |   | 0.794     | 1.260 |
| 5. GS      | 3.991 | 0.945 | 0.305** | 0.285** | 0.351** | 0.282** | 1 | 0.842     | 1.187 |

Note. \*\*, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Author's own work

### **Multiple Regression Analysis**

The researcher performed a multiple regression analysis to evaluate the research hypotheses. The results encompassed a model summary table, ANOVA, and coefficients to assess

the model's adequacy, significance, and the impact of each independent variable on the prediction of EI. The study's results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Multiple Regression Analysis Results (Model Summary, ANOVA, and Coefficients)*

| <b>Predictor Variables</b>                                                                                                      | <b>Unstandardized B</b> | <b>Std. Error</b> | <b>Standardized <math>\beta</math></b> | <b>t-value</b> | <b>p-value</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| (Constant)                                                                                                                      | 1.392                   | 0.195             |                                        | 7.139          | 0              |
| Resource Readiness (RR)                                                                                                         | 0.266                   | 0.036             | 0.373                                  | 7.29           | 0.000***       |
| Learning Experience (LE)                                                                                                        | 0.274                   | 0.04              | 0.362                                  | 6.826          | 0.000***       |
| Technological Advancement (TA)                                                                                                  | 0.115                   | 0.039             | 0.142                                  | 2.915          | 0.004**        |
| Government Support (GS)                                                                                                         | 0.013                   | 0.019             | 0.032                                  | 0.665          | 0.507          |
| R = 0.721, R <sup>2</sup> = 0.520, Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.512, Std. Error of the Estimate = 0.26628, Durbin-Watson = 1.920 |                         |                   |                                        |                |                |
| F-value = 68.655, df = 4.254, $p < 0.001$                                                                                       |                         |                   |                                        |                |                |

Note. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$  (2-tailed). Dependent Variable: EI.

The correlation coefficient (R) was 0.721, signifying a strong association between the independent factors and EI. The R<sup>2</sup> score was 0.520, and the corrected R<sup>2</sup> value was 0.512, signifying that the independent factors explained approximately 51–52% of the variance in EI. The standard error of the estimate was 0.26628, signifying an acceptable degree of prediction error (Pallant, 2020). The Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.920, suggesting an absence of significant association among the residuals. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for the multiple regression model indicated that the independent variables RR, LE, TA, and GS strongly predicted the dependent variable EI ( $F = 68.655$ ,  $df = 4, 254$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The regression sum of squares was 19.472, the residual value was 18.010, resulting in a total of 37.481. This outcome demonstrated that all independent factors significantly affected the variance explanation of EI, underscoring the model's suitability for testing the results.

The regression coefficient analysis results presented in Table 5 indicate that RR ( $B = 0.266$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), LE ( $B = 0.274$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and TA ( $B = 0.115$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) exert a statistically significant positive effect on EI. RR exerted the greatest influence (Beta = 0.373), succeeded by LE (Beta = 0.362) and TA (Beta = 0.142), hence corroborating H1, H2, and H3, respectively. Conversely, GS exhibited no significant impact on EI ( $p > 0.05$ ). Consequently, H4 was not substantiated. The multiple regression analysis revealed that the model explained 52% of the variance in the dependent variable. The equation can express the linear relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable:

$$Y(\text{EI}) = 1.392 + 0.266(\text{RR}) + 0.274(\text{LE}) + 0.115(\text{TA})$$

The findings from this study reinforce that the decision of women entrepreneurs to develop or expand their business (EI) is predicated more on internal capabilities and human capital than on reliance on governmental support. The analysis indicates that the variables RR and LE emerged as the most influential factors (Beta = 0.373 and Beta = 0.362, respectively). This signifies that women entrepreneurs who perceive themselves as having adequate financial, tangible, and intangible resources, and who continually seek knowledge and training, exhibit significantly higher commitment to business growth and expansion.

The analysis confirms that EI among women SME operators in the restaurant sector is predominantly driven by endogenous factors, heavily dependent on RR and LE. While TA remains an important contributor to business development, the external factor of GS currently lacks efficacy. This presents a significant challenge for policymakers aiming to stimulate regional growth.

### **Discussions**

This research aims to synthesize the quantitative findings regarding the factors influencing EI among women SME restaurant operators in Northeastern Thailand. The study extends beyond a mere statistical explanation to encompass a theoretical and contextual interpretation of the results. The findings unequivocally confirm that endogenous entrepreneurial capabilities, specifically RR and LE are the most critical determinants governing the level of EI. Concurrently, the study reveals a significant gap in the exogenous support system, particularly demonstrating that GS currently fails to generate a statistically significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention.

The hypothesis testing results demonstrate that RR and LE exert the highest influence on women's EI. This relationship strongly aligns with the core tenets of the Resource-Based View (RBV), which posits that internal, valuable, and non-substitutable organizational resource deployments dictate sustained capability more than external interventions (Barney, 1991). This strongly reinforces the tenets of the RBV, which asserts that the perception of possessing valuable and rare resources such as working capital, robust familial networks, and high-quality raw materials forms the foundation of a competitive advantage that bolsters the self-confidence of women entrepreneurs in the food service sector. Furthermore, the significant influence of LE supports Kolb's (2014) Experiential Learning Theory. This theory explains that learning derived from direct, practical engagement such as working with family, problem-solving in production processes, and industry-specific specialized training is instrumental in transforming experience into applied business strategies (Yiğit, 2025). In the context of the Thai restaurant business, where many skills are intergenerationally transferred, this finding clearly indicates that contextually relevant practical knowledge holds greater significance than all types of external factors. Therefore, based on the hypothesis testing results, H1 and H2 are accepted.

Regarding TA, although the corresponding hypothesis was supported, the magnitude of this variable's effect was smaller compared to RR and LE. This suggests that technology primarily functions as a supportive tool (facilitator) rather than the principal driver of EI. Technological advancements, such as online ordering systems, digital payments, and social media marketing, contribute to generating market opportunities, enhancing customer reach, and creating competitive differentiation, all of which are factors that improve survival potential in a highly competitive

marketplace (Raimo et al., 2023). In the context of the Northeast region, digital technology is viewed as a critical instrument for mitigating geographical constraints and fragmented customer bases, effectively allowing small businesses to connect with national markets and participate in the digital economy. Therefore, based on the hypothesis testing results, H4 is accepted.

Conversely, the study found that GS was not statistically significant in predicting EI. Therefore, H 4 is rejected. This outcome contradicts findings from previous literature and reflects a structural failure in policy implementation within the region. This result necessitates an in-depth consideration within the context of regional disparity and the mismatch between policy design and operational reality (Gujarati, 2020). Furthermore, the non-significant effect of GS strongly reflects this scale limitation; generic SME policies often fail to penetrate the micro-enterprise stratum, as these extremely small-scale operators frequently lack the administrative capacity to navigate bureaucratic channels or access macro-level state assistance. Access to government services in peripheral areas, such as the Northeast region, is often hampered by complex bureaucratic processes, particularly impacting women who manage both domestic responsibilities and professional roles. Furthermore, the nature of state support tends to be generic (e.g., blanket cross-industry training or micro-credit schemes). These generalized forms of support fail to address the specific, acute needs of the restaurant sector, which requires rapid working capital rotation and specialized knowledge in areas like food safety compliance and digital delivery systems. Consequently, these support modalities cannot truly reach the target group or generate measurable outcomes. The non-significant finding also reflects cultural and trust factors. However, this result must not be over-generalized to assume all public mechanisms are inherently flawed. Alternative explanations warrant careful consideration: first, a substantial portion of the surveyed female restaurateurs reported never having actively attempted to access or apply for formal government programs due to a lack of programmatic awareness. Second, in alignment with regional socio-cultural dynamics, respondents heavily rely on informal family networks and local kinship structures as their primary safety nets rather than formal state apparatuses. Finally, government support might not possess a direct relationship with EI but may instead function indirectly by bolstering underlying resource readiness or accelerating digital technology adoption, acting as an unmeasured mediating or moderating catalyst that warrants further multi-stage empirical tracking.

Consequently, the non-significance of GS does not imply that such policies are unnecessary but rather reflects that the current modality of policy execution is insufficient to generate adequate psychological and behavioural impact required to genuinely reinforce women entrepreneurs' attitudes and motivation toward business growth. Future policy development must therefore focus on designing support mechanisms that are contextually aligned with the operational realities of micro-entrepreneurs. This strategic shift is necessary to effectively exert a positive influence on the EI and positive business behaviour of women in the restaurant service sector.

## **Conclusions**

This study investigates the factors influencing the Entrepreneurial Intention of women operators of SMEs restaurants, focusing on RR, LE, TA, and GS. The empirical findings reveal that EI is significantly influenced by endogenous potential and market-linked capabilities, namely RR, LE,

and TA. This validates key tenets of the TBP and the RBV, confirming that perceived behavioral control over resources and digital assets are critical strategic drivers in venture creation. Conversely, while GS exhibits a positive correlation, it lacks statistical significance. This outcome suggests that current state interventions do not align with the practical needs of women entrepreneurs, resulting in a low perceived usefulness of these policies.

Based on these insights, female entrepreneurs should prioritize systematic resource management and data-driven technology integration to enhance operational efficiency. For policymakers, a paradigm shift from generalized budget expenditures to localized, demand-driven interventions is crucial, particularly in the Northeast region. Implementation should be channeled through local networks like Women SME Clusters, supported by financial reforms that ease collateral requirements to establish expedited micro-credit access for immediate operational needs. Furthermore, intensive digital skills training focusing on e-commerce and inventory management should be delivered through Regional Science Parks as centralized incubation hubs. Ultimately, sustaining women-driven restaurant businesses relies on bolstering internal capabilities rather than generic government spending, ensuring a meaningful impact on economic growth and digital transformation.

### **Recommendation**

Based strictly on the empirical evidence where RR and LE exert the most powerful effects, with TA serving as a crucial facilitator, the practical recommendations are strategically targeted. For entrepreneurs, the focus must center on leveraging peer-to-peer experiential knowledge within regional cluster networks, establishing strict baseline resource management to mitigate supply chain shocks, and adopting integrated digital tools to expand market reach. Further, for policymakers, because general macro-subsidies yielded ineffective results, public intervention must shift toward financing specific experiential learning initiatives. The government should allocate budgets directly to the Northeast Regional Science Park to subsidize targeted, action-oriented training in digital literacy and operational data analytics. Furthermore, rather than relying on standard commercial credit criteria, micro-finance programs should be routed through active Women SME Clusters to streamline access to capital for immediate raw material procurement, precisely matching the acute demands identified by the empirical model.

### **Future Research**

Future research should expand beyond the restaurant SME sector and Northeastern Thailand to include cross-industry and cross-regional comparisons, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings. However, to address the limitation regarding enterprise scale, subsequent studies should explicitly stratify samples to include a more balanced representation of distinct small and medium-sized segments, enabling cross-scale comparative analyses to identify how firm size moderates the relationship between external influences and EI. Further, longitudinal and mixed-method approaches could capture how women's EI evolve over time and reveal deeper insights into their lived experiences. Theoretically, subsequent studies should extend the TBP by integrating contextual and gender-related variables, while also drawing on the RBV and ELT to explain how women transform resources and experiences into entrepreneurial capability. Moreover,

as digital transformation accelerates, future research should examine how emerging technologies such as AI, e-commerce, and social media platforms influence opportunity recognition and entrepreneurial self-efficacy among female SME entrepreneurs.

### Author Contributions

CS: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data collection, Formal analysis, Writing – Original draft.

WN: Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing.

### Declaration of the Use of Generative AI

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Chat GPT, Gemini, and Grammarly to assist with language editing and polishing of the draft. The tool was used solely to improve clarity, grammar, and overall readability. The authors reviewed and revised the output as necessary and take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

### Ethics

This study received ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Suranaree University of Technology (SUT) Approval No EC-67-195. All procedures followed relevant ethical guidelines, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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