

## Empowering Women Homepreneurs in Tourism and Hospitality: Entrepreneurial Competencies and Learning Approach

**Ayman Harb**

Department of Hotel Management, School of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Jordan, Aqaba, Jordan

**Wejdan Alakaleek**

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business, Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan

**Suzy Hatough-Bouran**

Tamkeen for Sustainable Tourism Development, Amman, Jordan

**Ahmed Freewan**

Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture and Design, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid, Jordan

**Abdallah Yousef Alharahsheh**

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research-Jordan, Amman, Jordan

**Hadeel Al-Maaitah**

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business, Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan

**Received:** 13 October 2024. **Revision received:** 13 January 2025. **Accepted:** 29 March 2025

### Abstract

This study explores the essential competencies required by women homepreneurs in the tourism and hospitality sector and examines an effective learning approach to support their development. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with women homepreneurs in Umm Qais, a rural tourism destination. The findings reveal two clusters of competencies: those requiring further support (communication skills, entrepreneurship and business growth, financial management, and total quality management) and those entirely lacking (digital transformation, digital marketing, and online content creation). The study highlights that experiential learning, through a combination of theory, project visits, and field trips, is an effective method for developing these competencies. The findings extend existing theoretical frameworks on entrepreneurial competencies by emphasizing the importance of digital adaptation and experiential learning in post-pandemic contexts. Practically, the study provides actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and support organizations to empower women homepreneurs by addressing competency gaps and implementing experiential learning strategies. The study stresses the need to tailor entrepreneurship education to the unique challenges faced by women in rural settings, contributing to sustainable development and community resilience. Moreover, the study goes beyond economic advantages to shed light on the social impact of empowering women who run home-based businesses. It emphasizes how such efforts promote gender inclusivity, tackle rural unemployment, and build stronger community ties.

**Key Words:** women's homepreneur empowerment, homepreneurs' competencies, tourism and hospitality homepreneurs, and entrepreneurial competencies

**JEL Classification:** L83, L26, Q01

**Reference:** Harb, A., Alakaleek, W., Hatough-Bouran, S., Freewan, A., Al-Harahsheh, A. Y., & Al-Maaitah, H. (2025). Empowering Women Homepreneurs in Tourism and Hospitality: Entrepreneurial Competencies and Learning Approach. *Journal of Tourism and Services*, 16(30), 165-189. <https://doi.org/10.29036/0ymceq94>

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is a major economic growth and development driver in many rural areas and local communities worldwide (Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020; Mura & Kajzar, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the tourism and hospitality industry, affecting both developed and developing countries (Haryanto, 2020; Pham et al., 2021; Hoang et al., 2023; Škare et al., 2021). Rural areas and creative economies in local communities have been hit hard since they typically lack the infrastructure and capacity to deal with the rapid fall in visitor visits (Giddy et al., 2022; Xie et al., 2024). Additionally, the epidemic has brought attention to the vulnerability of women, young people, and those from poor backgrounds who work in micro, small, and medium-sized businesses in the tourism industry (Zaazou & Salman, 2022; Kaberia & Muathe, 2021; Monterrubio, 2022; Jumriani et al., 2022). This group of people has been disproportionately impacted by the epidemic because they are frequently working in low-paying and insecure employment that are the first to be eliminated or halted.

In response to the pandemic, new trends in tourism and hospitality have emerged, emphasizing the need for sustainable tourism products and services. (Ziyadin et al., 2019; Lama & Rai, 2021; Polukhina et al., 2021; Salim et al., 2024; Alsharif et al., 2024; Alsharif et al., 2023). To improve competitiveness and promote fair chances for education, decent job, and well-being for local people, these trends necessitate the incorporation of sustainable tourism practices into tourism development plans and strategies (Sharma et al., 2024; Streimikiene et al., 2021). This is in line with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Global Code of Ethics on local community rights and obligations and the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Despite the increasing literature emphasizing the role of women entrepreneurs in fostering socio-economic development (Al-Qahtani, Muneera et al., 2022), there has been limited focus on the competencies needed by women home-based entrepreneurs (homepreneurs) in the tourism and hospitality sector (Malik et al., 2024; Mashapure et al., 2022). Most existing studies broadly examine entrepreneurial competencies without addressing the unique challenges faced by homepreneurs operating in rural or resource-constrained contexts (Chen & Barcus, 2024), such as Umm Qais, Jordan. Moreover, while digital transformation and marketing have been recognized as critical drivers of business growth (Ben Slimane et al., 2022), research on how these competencies can be developed among women homepreneurs remains scarce, particularly in post-pandemic settings where the need for digital adaptation has intensified.

This study addresses the gap by focusing on women homepreneurs within the tourism and hospitality sector, specifically examining their competency needs and the learning approaches required to foster these skills. By identifying two distinct clusters of competencies—those requiring support (e.g., communication, entrepreneurship, and financial management) and those lacking entirely (e.g., digital transformation, marketing, and content creation)—this research contributes to a nuanced understanding of the capacity-building needs of women homepreneurs.

To address the research gap, the study explores the following research questions:

- What are the key competencies women homepreneurs require in the tourism and hospitality sector in rural areas of Jordan, particularly in resource-constrained regions such as Umm Qais?
- What is the most effective learning approach to develop these competencies, particularly in post-pandemic settings?

The study introduces an experiential learning model tailored to rural homepreneurs, integrating theory, project visits, and field trips. This approach advances knowledge in entrepreneurial education and provides actionable insights for stakeholders aiming to empower women in tourism. By bridging the competency gap, this research supports sustainable development goals, enhances women's economic participation, and contributes to community resilience in tourism-dependent regions.

Within this evolving landscape, entrepreneurial and homepreneur competencies emerge as crucial factors for success. These competencies encompass a spectrum of skills, including innovation,

adaptability, and effective communication, essential for navigating the complexities of business ownership (Susanti et al., 2023a). Furthermore, homepreneurs, operating within unique constraints, require additional skills such as time management and digital proficiency to thrive in their endeavors (Dsouza & Panakaje, 2023; Rout et al., 2022). By fostering the development of these competencies, stakeholders can empower entrepreneurs and homepreneurs to drive economic growth, promote sustainability, and enhance community resilience in the tourism sector (Dsouza & Panakaje, 2023).

This study contribution lies in its exploration of the essential competencies required for the success of women tourism and hospitality homepreneurs in the tourism sector, particularly amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. By conducting semi-structured interviews with 10 women homepreneurs in Umm Qais, insights were gained into the competencies needed to support their ventures. Hence, the research aims to contribute to the empowerment of local small businesses, particularly women's home-based ventures, within the tourism and hospitality sector. By identifying the most needed competencies and an effective learning approach to support their development, the study seeks to enhance the capabilities of women homepreneurs, ultimately fostering economic growth, promoting sustainability, and enhancing community resilience within the tourism and hospitality sector.

To guide the reader through the study, the following structure has been adopted. The next section presents the theoretical framework, which outlines the key concepts of homepreneurial competencies and experiential learning. The methodology section details the qualitative research design, including data collection through semi-structured interviews and analysis methods. The findings section highlights the identified competency clusters and the effectiveness of the experiential learning approach. This is followed by a discussion that situates the findings within the broader literature and emphasizes the study's implications. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the key contributions, addresses limitations, and suggests directions for future research.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Homepreneurs entrepreneurial competencies

Entrepreneurs and homepreneurs play a significant role in today's economy, contributing to innovation, job creation, and economic growth (Pattanayak & Padhy, 2022). Research on homepreneurs' entrepreneurial competencies has gained traction in recent years, shedding light on the skills and qualities essential for success in this unique business context.

Home-based entrepreneurship has emerged as a transformative model for economic participation, shaped by global shifts toward remote work, advancements in technology, and evolving socio-economic needs. It serves as a vital mechanism for fostering innovation, self-employment, and regional economic development, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. Recent studies (Malik et al., 2024; Susanti et al., 2023b; Khoo et al., 2024) highlight that home-based businesses play a crucial role in fostering economic resilience, especially during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach, centered on operating businesses from home, offers increased flexibility and adaptability, addressing both economic necessity and opportunities within the gig economy. Moreover, Khan, Ali, Khan, and Hameed, (2021) and Dsouza and Panakaje (2023) emphasize that women entrepreneurs often leverage their unique cultural and regional resources to create niche products and services, contributing to local economies and tourism.

One crucial aspect of homepreneurs' competencies is adaptability. Operating a business from home often requires individuals to navigate various challenges, including fluctuating market conditions, changing customer preferences, and personal obligations. Homepreneurs must be adaptable and flexible, willing to pivot their business strategies when necessary to meet evolving demands (Malik et

al., 2024). Effective time management skills are also essential for homepreneurs to optimize productivity and balance work-life responsibilities (Lévesque & Stephan, 2020).

Furthermore, homepreneurs need strong communication skills to build and maintain relationships with clients, suppliers, and other stakeholders. Effective communication fosters trust, facilitates collaboration, and enhances customer satisfaction, all of which are critical for long-term business success (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). Innovation is another key competency for homepreneurs, enabling them to identify new market opportunities, develop unique products or services, and differentiate themselves from competitors. Home-based businesses often operate in niche markets, making innovation a crucial driver of growth and competitive advantage (Gnyawali & Fogel, 1994).

Financial management skills are vital for homepreneurs to ensure the financial health and sustainability of their businesses. This includes budgeting, cash flow management, financial forecasting, and investment decision-making. Sound financial management practices help homepreneurs minimize risks, seize opportunities for growth, and achieve long-term profitability (Kirsten, 2018). Additionally, digital proficiency has become increasingly important for homepreneurs in today's digital age. Leveraging technology and online platforms enables home-based businesses to reach a wider audience, market their products or services more effectively, and streamline operations. Homepreneurs must stay abreast of digital trends and tools to remain competitive in the digital marketplace (Khoo et al., 2024; Oggero et al., 2020; Khatami et al., 2024).

Moreover, digital transformation has been a pivotal factor in the success of home-based businesses, enabling entrepreneurs to reach broader markets and streamline operations. As highlighted by Rout et al. (2022), the ability to adopt digital tools and platforms is increasingly regarded as a critical competency for homepreneurs. This is particularly relevant in the tourism and hospitality sector, where online presence and digital marketing have become essential for attracting customers and sustaining growth.

For women pursuing business growth, Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013) defined four clusters of competencies including personal and relationship competencies, business and management competencies, entrepreneurial competencies and human relations competencies. Rudhumbu et al. (2020) showed the need of women entrepreneurs for some competencies including knowledge of sources of financing, technical skills, business growth strategies and marketing strategies. Recently, it has become evident that obtaining entrepreneurial digital skills is important for women tourism entrepreneurs (Khoo et al., 2024).

Overall, studies explained that homepreneurs' entrepreneurial competencies encompass a diverse range of skills and qualities essential for navigating the complexities of running a business from home. Most of these studies in the literature have studied entrepreneurs in general with limited representation of women homepreneurs. Therefore, this study aims to focus on the competencies of women tourism homepreneurs, especially in the post-COVID-19 era. For example, De Vita et al. (2014) explored competencies required by women entrepreneurs in developing countries, highlighting the need for training in both business management and ICT skills, but did not specifically address homepreneurs. Similarly, Baral et al. (2023) identified critical areas needing development for women entrepreneurs in India, such as soft skills and financial literacy, without a specific focus on home-based businesses. Studies by Fayolle and Gailly (2015) and Cooper and Lucas (2006) emphasized the role of experiential learning and mentorship in developing entrepreneurial skills yet did not specifically investigate how these approaches apply to women homepreneurs.

Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap by focusing on the competencies of women tourism homepreneurs, especially in the post-COVID-19 era. This focus is particularly relevant as the pandemic has accelerated digital transformation and highlighted the need for specific digital competencies among home-based entrepreneurs. By addressing the unique challenges and competency

needs of women homepreneurs, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial competencies in the home-based business sector.

## 2.2 Learning approach

### 2.2.1 Experiential learning

Experiential learning is a widely recognized teaching method that actively engages students in real-world experiences (Motta et al., 2023; Hawtrey, 2007). This approach has proven to be effective, particularly in the field of tourism entrepreneurship (Arcodia et al., 2021). It allows learners to directly observe and understand the impacts of tourism entrepreneurship on the environment, society, and the economy. This understanding is facilitated through activities such as field trips to tourism destinations, interactive workshops with industry professionals, and engagement in volunteer projects. For example, research in the field of experiential education highlights the benefits of experiential learning in engaging students (Kolb et al., 2014; Lu, 2021). Additionally, Başaran (2016) explores the application of experiential learning specifically in tourism education. His research suggests the integration of practical, student-centered experiential learning activities alongside theoretical content. Moreover, continuous interaction and cooperation between the institution, industry, and policymakers are deemed essential to adapt the curriculum effectively to meet the rapidly evolving needs of the tourism industry.

Experiential learning is a process of knowledge creation through the transformation of experience, according to Kolb's definition (1984). Research has shown that the combination of instruction with experiential learning is an effective way to apply education principles (Caulfield, 2023; Furman & Sibthorp, 2013). Each experience has multiple aspects, and different learners extract different meanings from an experience depending on their prior experiences (Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Experiential learning is a holistic process that involves a person's emotions, motivations, senses, socio-cultural context, and personality, as emphasized in learner-centered education (LCE) theory (Kolb & Kolb, 2006). Experiential learning emphasizes learning by doing and applying in the real world, leading to generalization (Kolb, 2014; Christian et al., 2021). It is contrasted with learning in which the learner reads about, talks about, or writes about realities but never comes into contact with them as part of the learning process.

Kolb's experiential learning theory operates on two levels: a four-stage cycle of learning and four separate learning styles (Kolb et al., 2014). Kolb's theory concerns the learner's internal cognitive processes. In Kolb's theory, learning involves the acquisition of abstract concepts that can be applied flexibly in a range of situations. The impetus for the development of new concepts is provided by new experiences. Effective learning occurs when a person progresses through a cycle of four stages: having a concrete experience, followed by observation of and reflection on that experience, which leads to the formation of abstract concepts and generalizations, which are then used to test a hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences.

Experiential learning can take place inside and outside the classroom (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). In-class examples include laboratories, specialized equipment, simulations, role play, practical activities, projects, narrative games, storytelling, model building, debating and discussion, and working in laboratories and demonstrations. Out-of-class examples include visits, observational work, experiments, live research, case study, field surveys, internships, and off-site laboratories.

Experiential education serves as an umbrella for linking many diverse practices into a coherent whole. It is often the basis of initiatives that link traditional scholarly priorities, such as formal knowledge production, with the improvement of professional practice (Beard & Wilson, 2018).

The case study of Umm Qais demonstrates that the learning experience was designed in the framework of Kolb's theory and practice in a holistic manner, taking into consideration the prior experiences of learners and the social, cultural, and economic context of rural areas. Continuous

assessment at each step was essential to ensure effective and efficient learning outcomes. The case of Umm Qais proves that experiential learning is one of the best ways to teach skills necessary for empowering local host communities to provide quality services to tourists and to impact sustainable tourism development in their societies.

### 2.2.2 Learner-centered education (LCE)

The principles of learner-centered learning provide a comprehensive framework for guiding experiential learning (Estes, 2004). This approach prioritizes inclusivity in the decision-making process, promotes accountability, and emphasizes the responsibility of learners for their decisions and actions (Wolfe & Poon, 2015). In contrast to traditional teaching theories, student-centered learning focuses on individual student interests, abilities, and learning styles, with the teacher serving as a facilitator or enabler of learning for individuals rather than for the class as a whole (Keiler, 2018). Learner-centered education (LCE) is an example of 'best practice' pedagogy, which includes activity-based, inquiry-based, and problem-based learning (Shah Ph, & Kumar, 2020).

A key feature of LCE is the development of a rich learning environment that includes real-life stimulations and facilities, designed and managed in accordance with the objectives of the learning process and tailored to meet the learner's individual needs (Murdoch & Wilson, 2008; Zintgraff & Hirumi, 2023).

The main features of the LCE learning process include building confidence in learners' abilities, recognition of social skills such as cooperation, teamwork, and respect for others' differences. It promotes creative and innovative thinking, and providing experiential learning opportunities through research, case study, project-based learning, internships, and social service activities (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2009; Gravani et al., 2024; Evans, 2023). Responsible learners are prepared for making decisions about education, work, and citizenship, with learners taking responsibility for their decisions through active participation in outlining the learning objectives, the teaching and learning process, and policy, strategic, and operational levels (Quisumbing, 2005; Bell, 2016).

Critics have questioned the suitability of LCE for different cultures and societies with limited resources, but these limitations do not weaken the basic principles of LCE. The need for creative approaches to adapt LCE to different contexts is necessary for stimulating learning. The UNWTO TedQual Certification Program considers the LCE theory and approach a best practice in preparing future professionals for employment in the tourism labor market, contributing to the sustainable tourism development in destinations.

LCE aligns well with the philosophy and characteristics of tourism and tourism education. It builds essential values and behaviors in local hosts required in tourism and hospitality services, such as respect for cultural diversity, empathy, and a better understanding of visitors' needs, including safety and wellbeing. LCE also helps in developing responsible community leaders in communities with tourism-related lifelong skills and an intrinsic sense of belonging to their community. These leaders can act responsibly and sustainably towards providing authentic hospitality services and products motivated with pride and a sense of ownership, while empowered with knowledge and skills to participate in leading development in their societies.

### 2.2.3 Community education in tourism

The tourism industry has increasingly expanded to remote and marginal communities in less developed countries, with villagers in these areas often finding themselves on the tourism front line (Cohen, 2003). Despite lacking experience and access to formal education and training, these individuals are expected to provide quality service to tourists. However, there is a significant gap in literature regarding the content and methods of community education programs for these individuals,

and government programs have mainly focused on service provision rather than developing their confidence and skills for empowerment (Towner, 2016).

Community participation is crucial in ensuring that tourism development projects are relevant to local needs and receive support and acceptance from the community (Milano & Gascón, 2024). As a service industry, tourism is heavily reliant on the cooperation and goodwill of host communities. Therefore, it is necessary to address the educational needs of host communities, particularly those in rural areas dependent on tourism for their livelihoods.

This study aims to address these needs by presenting a case study of villagers in Umm Qais and exploring the use of experiential learning and the principles of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism in designing a curriculum to empower small business owners. This innovative approach seeks to satisfy the needs of locals, provide tourists with quality services and products, and contribute to sustainable development plans in Umm Qais. Ultimately, the study highlights the importance of developing community-wide esteem building and cross-cultural understanding, as well as education about the expectations of tourists.

### 3. Methodology

A qualitative research approach was employed to investigate the tourism and hospitality women homepreneurs' competencies for enhancing the competitiveness and attractiveness of local tourism ventures in Umm Qais. The perspectives of women home business owners were sought to obtain new insights about their challenges, needed competencies for their home-based business. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with tourism women homepreneurs in Umm Qais. The sample for this study consisted of 10 women homepreneurs from Umm Qais, Jordan. The sample size was determined based on qualitative research standards, where a smaller, purposefully chosen group allows for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and insights (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This aligns with Guetterman's (2015) observation of an average sample size of 15, ranging between 8 and 31 in qualitative educational research, further supporting the appropriateness of the chosen sample size for this study. This size ensured manageable data collection and thematic saturation while providing a diverse range of perspectives from participants with varying levels of experience, business types, and operational scales.

The Umm Qais region was chosen as the study site for several reasons. First, it is a prominent rural area in Jordan with significant potential for tourism due to its rich cultural and historical heritage, including archaeological sites and natural landscapes. Second, the region has seen increasing interest in community-based tourism, which aligns with the study's focus on women homepreneurs operating in the tourism and hospitality sector. Third, Umm Qais faces unique challenges related to infrastructure, economic development, and access to resources, making it a critical area for investigating the competencies required for women homepreneurs to succeed in such contexts.

#### 3.1 Data collection

Recruitment of participants was through a form of snowball sampling. This involved initially identifying potential participants through researchers' personal networks and business agency contacts in Umm Qais. These initial participants then helped reach out to additional women homepreneurs, increasing the number of potential participants in the study. A total of 41 women homepreneurs in tourism and hospitality were contacted to participate in the study, however, 10 of them were willing and available to participate in the study. Women homepreneurs who were selected for interviews were chosen based on specific criteria: first, ownership of business by women; second, operation within the tourism and hospitality industry; third, a business operating in a rural area specifically in Umm Qais.

Data collection was conducted over two months, from November to January 2023, ensuring ample time to gather comprehensive insights from the 10 women homepreneurs through semi-structured interviews.

Data analysis began following the first interview, and data collection continued until reaching the point of saturation, where additional data yielded no new insights and only redundant information was provided (Bradley et al., 2007). The profile of respondents and information about their home project are summarized in Table 1. The homepreneurs were requested to specify their competencies needs in the tourism and hospitality sector and suggest the most effective learning approach to help those homepreneurs to acquire the needed competencies. Thus, the Interviews included questions about the participants' personal and home-based business backgrounds. Respondents were then asked a set of questions to describe their business challenges, needed knowledge and skills and training expectations.

Table 1. **Participants profile**

Participants	Age	Type of business
W1	39	Hand crafts
W2	55	Food Production
W3	47	Plant seed
W4	40	Accommodation
W5	55	Hand craft
W6	36	Hand craft
W7	25	Hand craft
W8	28	Hand craft
W9	43	Food Production
W10	50	Food Production

Source: authors

These interviews helped researchers to tailor a training program to meet the women's homepreneurs needs and expectations. This training program was delivered by a team of experts from Jordanian universities. 36 women homepreneurs participated in the training program which took place in Umm Qais and provided two full days per week for six weeks. To present the impact of the learning process on the women homepreneurs, interviews with the same 10 participants were conducted directly after they finished the training program. Post-interviews focused on assessing the learning approach and consisted of some questions related to the impact of lectures, field trips and project visits on participants' knowledge and some other questions focused on the participants' plan for benefiting their business.

All of the participants in the study provided their informed consent, and they were given the option to withdraw at any time. All data have been analyzed at the aggregate level, ensuring the anonymity of individuals and their businesses. All interviews were conducted in Arabic and were subsequently translated into English by the primary researchers, who are native Arabic speakers. Interviews were also conducted in person in the participants' office premises to minimize any potential disruptions. On average, each interview had a duration of 45 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and the data was analyzed thematically to identify key themes and patterns.

### 3.2 Data analysis

The data analysis included the identification of recurring topics and the manual coding of textual data into themes extracted from the perspectives of the participants (Stewart & Draper, 2007). This study employed the within-case and across-case approaches to analyze the data. This involves an

analysis of each interview separately and then comparing them across all 10 interviews. This approach allowed for identifying similarities and differences, leading to the generation of study themes. To define these themes, this study applied the scheme of provisional categories (open coding) and aggregate theoretical theme coding (axial coding) (Gioia et al., 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Through the axial coding process, selective coding was utilized to define the core related concepts that represent the themes (Holton, 2007) and build the aggregate theoretical themes. Given the exploratory nature of this study and the emphasis on an in-depth qualitative approach, data analysis was conducted manually to ensure a comprehensive and deep understanding of the participants' perspectives.

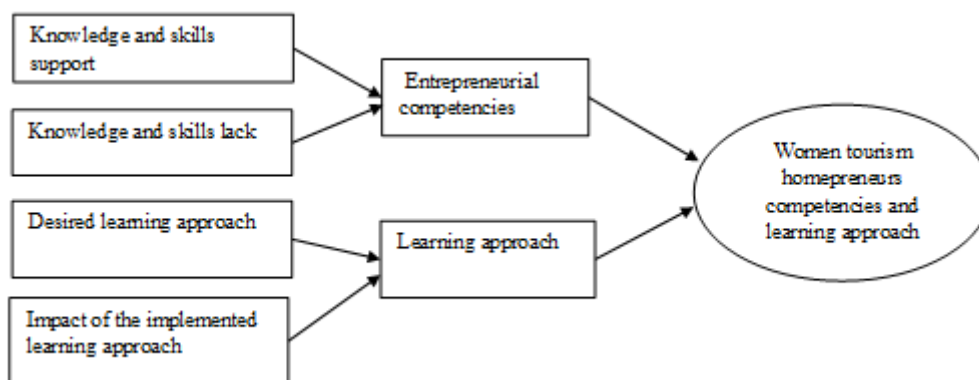
To conduct the data analysis, our analysis consisted of three main steps: First, we started by identifying any repeated statements and organizing them into first-order categories (open coding) (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During open coding, relevant terms were identified based on participants' language through line-by-line analysis. Second, the data analysis process then involved axial coding, which involved searching for relationships among the first-order categories to reassemble them into second-order categories. In the final stage of data analysis, core concepts and aggregate theoretical theme was identified after condensing the second-order categories as identified in Figure 1.

The research participants represented diverse levels of entrepreneurial experience, business types, and operational scales, including sectors such as food production, handicrafts, and accommodations. While this diversity enriched the study by capturing a broad range of perspectives, it also introduced variability that could influence the reliability of the results. To mitigate this, the analysis employed within and across-case analysis to examine similarities at the experience levels and to ensure that findings reflect patterns rather than isolated cases. Additionally, the researchers ensured thematic saturation by continuing data collection until no new insights emerged. This approach aimed at balancing the richness of diverse experiences with the need for reliable and coherent results.

## 4. Research results

This section presents the study findings, using power quotes to illustrate the research themes.

Figure 1. The proposed research themes



Source: authors

### 4.1 Key competencies required by women homepreneurs

The study identified two clusters of competencies for women homepreneurs: those requiring support and those entirely lacking.

#### 4.1.1 Knowledge and skills support

All participants agreed that they required assistance in enhancing their knowledge and skills in certain areas to effectively manage their home-based business. They needed support in areas including communication skills, entrepreneurship and business growth, financial management and total quality management. Illustrative examples are presented in Table (2).

Women homepreneurs participants perceived that enhancing their communication skills would have great value to their business because of the importance of such skills in building contacts with all stakeholders, especially in the tourism industry. W4 explained 'I have to improve the way we interact with visitors to provide exceptional customer service and create memorable experiences to them'. Some participants need support in improving their storytelling skills, language proficiency, and cross-cultural communication, for example: 'I am good at telling my story and how I make [traditional handmade clothing], um, but I feel sometimes, especially when there are some visitors from outside Jordan, um I feel I am not that professional in telling my story' (W8). The participants require assistance in enhancing their communication skills to create a positive and welcoming atmosphere, encouraging visitor engagement, and fostering positive recommendations. They stated: 'when you are good at talking to people, they will tell others about your food' (W10); 'when anyone contacts me through WhatsApp to order food, I feel that I need to be careful about how I replay, what questions I need to ask them to prepare their orders, it is not easy' (W2).

Table 2. **Entrepreneurial competencies**

Themes	Competency Area	Description	Example Quotes	Agreement (N = 10)	Percentage
<b>Knowledge and skills support</b>	Communication Skills	Enhancing interaction with stakeholders and tourists, including storytelling and language proficiency.	'I need to work more on how to talk professionally about local attractions, and cultural heritage to our guests' (W1). 'sometimes visitors don't understand my dialect' (W6). 'my English needs to be good' (W7). 'I need to know how to entertain visitors and tourists... create a good atmosphere, to keep tourists and agencies getting back to our place' (W4).	7	70%
	Entrepreneurship & Business Growth	Skills related to leadership, customer service, and networking and business expansion.	'some customers, oh, it is hard for me to know how to deal with them' (W7). 'customers' expectations these days are high and they always compare between my Thoubs and those ready-made Thoubs, I really don't know how to deal with that...' (W5). 'my place is in rural areas and I want to know all the local tourism boards, travel agencies, or organizations that work with tourists to ask them to promote my place to tourists' (W3).	8	80%
	Financial Management	Knowledge of budgeting, cash flow, and financial	'some days, I don't have money for making new items' (W1). 'I found that 'if I want to grow my business, financial control knowledge	7	70%

		control to maintain stability, optimize resources and comply with regulations.	would help me to be more precious and avoid penalties' (W6); 'I feel anxious when it comes to financial matters, as I don't know everything about the subject and the rules' (W8).		
	Total Quality Management	Ensuring high standards in product and service quality.	'if you want to compete, you need to know how to maintain the quality of the pieces that your product offers' (W7). 'knowing the principles of maintaining everything in my kitchen is important not for customers only, but also for making more money' (W2).	6	60%
	Digital Transformation	Transitioning to online platforms for marketing and operations.	'these days, you sell more, if you know how to sell online' (W9). 'all, all customers are online now, I need to have an Insta page' (W6). 'consumers are now all online, It's important for us to be on Facebook to reach more customers' (W1). 'having a website now is a must, tourists now they check everything online' (W4).	9	90%
<b>Knowledge and skills lack</b>	Digital Marketing	Using digital tools to promote products and services effectively.	'if you know how to promote your crafts online, more people will know about your craft, it's a challenge' (W8). 'I have a very beautiful place and everyone in the area knows about it, but I want the tourists from outside the area to know about us too ... my daughter helps me with Facebook, um, but not like I want, I want to do something big' (W3).	8	80%
	Digital content creation	acquiring knowledge and skills in digital content creation	'I don't even know where to start to learn how to make videos' (W3). 'I wish that I can learn how to take pictures like the one we see on Instagram' (W5). 'If I know how to create high-quality videos for my baking, people will view my work as a work of art' (W2).	7	70%

Source: authors

To run their businesses successfully, women homepreneurs highlighted that skills related to entrepreneurship and business growth are typically important for their home-based business in rural areas. Learning some entrepreneurial skills has, such as leadership and customer service been seen to be crucial for their business, for example: 'some leads work with me in the kitchen and I want to know how to lead them in a good way, you know if they are good, my food will be good too' (W10). The

participants also defined that developing their knowledge and skills in networking and seeking collaboration opportunities is a necessity, they stated: 'I wish I know where to go to expand my business' (W6).

The findings reflect an agreement among the participants regarding the indispensability of financial management for their home-based business. They explained that effective financial management is essential for maintaining financial stability. W8 explained: 'last month, I had to wait until sold some items to have cash'. By building strong financial management competencies, women homepreneurs would enhance their knowledge and skills in optimizing resources and complying with regulations. For example, W3 explained 'I need help assessing my business's financials to make improvements'. Among other described competencies that appeared also to be important for women homepreneurs is total quality management. The findings demonstrate consensus among the participants regarding the importance of increasing their knowledge about total quality management for their home-business. The women homepreneurs explained that paying attention to total quality management can drive improvement, efficiency, customer satisfaction, and overall success within their respective businesses. They stated: 'taking care of the quality of my products is crucial for my customer satisfaction' (W1); 'quality, quality, quality, this is what I hear always from our customer, so, I am prioritizing learning more about this now' (W6). Women participants considered enriching their knowledge about total quality practices to be crucial to help them in their business operations, reduce waste, and enhance overall efficiency, leading to better business outcomes. For example, W10 expressed: 'I am extra careful about kitchen cleanliness and the cooking place. It would be great if we could learn more about maintaining closeness and quality without incurring extra expenses'. W9 commented 'taste, package and the quality of everything is important to build trustable relationship with my customers'.

#### 4.1.2 Knowledge and skills lack

The analysis reflects the unique needs of some competencies for tourism and hospitality women homepreneurs operating in rural areas, where specific challenges and opportunities exist within the context of their location. The findings suggest that women homepreneurs lack certain competencies, particularly in the area of business digital transformation, digital marketing and digital content creation. Illustrative examples are presented in Table 2.

All respondents confirmed the necessity to know how to digitize their home-based business to start providing some online services, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of them commented: "The pandemic has shown us the importance of having an online presence. We need to adapt and offer our services online to be able to match customers' wants" (W8); 'after COVID 19, all customers started to ask if we have a website or Insta page' (W1). Women homepreneurs expressed their need to learn how to invest in technology and digital platforms to meet their customer needs. W5 explained: 'being online will help us survive and attract new customers, not only in Umm Qais'. Women homepreneurs emphasize the urgent need to learn how to adapt their home-based business into online services as a strategic response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. W 7 stated 'people get to use to order online during the COVID, so, if you are not on Facebook or Insta you are out'. W10 'I am a simple woman and I don't know about technology ... my customers usually order on WhatsApp, I don't know about Face [Facebook]'.

In today's digital age, women homepreneurs lack having a strong online presence and marketing tools. The need for digital marketing tools is crucial for the success of their home-business. (W7) commented: 'everyone, from everywhere. now sells handmade bags and souvenirs, but I have special items with beautiful embroidery, um, I feel, if I know how to promote these items on Face [Facebook] and Insta, I believe I could sell more'. W2 highlighted: 'I always take nice pictures for the cakes, cookies, tart and everything I make, and I send them through WhatsApp to the customer, and they

always encourage me to share them on Facebook ... I have Facebook but I have very few followers, I don't know what to do to'. Learning about digital marketing would enable them to know how to reach a wider audience and attract more customers.

Women homepreneurs confirmed the requirement of acquiring knowledge and skills in digital content creation to market their business. Participants reflect that high-quality photography and videos is crucial for showcasing their products and services. Some participants explained: 'everything on Fcae [Facebook] and Insta [Instagram] is nice, I can't do these videos' (W8); 'some crafts Facebook pages, even they don't have what I have, but they take pictures for their crafts' (W1). The participants believe that having competencies in digital content creation would enhance their products' image. W9 stated: 'If I have Facebook or Instagram pages, people will see me as a professional'.

## 4.2 Effective learning approach for competency development

### 4.2.1 Desired training approach

All women participants preferred a learning approach emphasizing experiential learning to engage in real-world experiences actively. W5 commented: 'I have been in many workshops, but I am looking for a new experience where I can see things in the real world'.. the suggested approach included a unique tool, incorporating theory (i.e., sessions), project visits to the participants' ventures, and field trips to similar or relevant institutions. Participants defined that: 'I would suggest that when you give us information, link it with something that we can learn from' (W8); 'do you know [X venture], it is a nice place ... take us to them to talk and see' (W4); 'I care about going [X incubator] and [Y restaurant], I want to sell my products to them' (W1). Illustrative examples are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Learning approach

Theme	Description	Example Quotes
<b>Desired training approach</b>	The preferred learning approach for developing entrepreneurial competencies	<i>'I want to do, um, see in my eyes, or even teach me practically, um, let me practice in my hands the standards of cleaning and hygiene process that restaurants or hotels do and implement' (W4).</i> <i>'I want to see something similar... what other women do in their projects' (W1).</i> <i>'can I invite you to my home, um, project and help me to improve the place' (W9);</i>
<b>Impact of the implemented learning approach</b>	The perceived value of the learning approach, which integrated theory, project visits to participants' ventures, and field trips to other businesses and institutions	<i>'visiting other women's projects and the trips exposed us to different businesses and tourist destinations, offering valuable insights and inspiration for our own ventures' (W3).</i> <i>'It was an enriching experience to observe successful practices and interact with professionals in some tourist destinations' (W7).</i>

Source: authors

The participants needed an approach that primarily emphasized facilitation rather than instruction, fostering knowledge transfer among all participants and trainers. Participants explained: 'I need some help in using Facebook and Instagram to promote my kitchen, can I see how others do this' (W2); 'why don't you take us to some successful projects and show us how they do their daily things' (W4); 'I want to see what others do to make them successful, I think I do everything I can do, but I do have customers like them ... I want to know my mistakes' (W3). Those women were looking for an approach that enables active and interactive participation among all participants in the training

program, They stated: 'I think if I speak to other women that have a business, I can understand more...' (W9); 'let us talk to others and learn' (W2); 'I am that person, if I don't talk with others, I don't fully understand' (W10); 'why don't you allow us to talk and learn from other have managed to do good things in their business' (W8).

#### 4.2.2 Impact of the implemented learning approach

All research participants reflected having positive experiences regarding the used learning approach during the training program. Participants' women homepreneurs perceived that combining the theory, project visits to participants' ventures, and field trips to other businesses and institutions were of the greatest value because of the relative degree of venture impact and usefulness of information of these visits and trips. W4 explained: "to learn from the trainers, and see other participants' projects and visit [X hotel] and [Y institution] allowed us to apply the knowledge to real-world situations and witness firsthand the practical aspects'. Illustrative examples are presented in Table 3.

The project visits offered numerous benefits for the women participants as they had the opportunity to present and share their own work, engaging in inclusive activities such as cooking for the entire group. Some participants explained: 'I learned from all of those women, we trained each other, I know now how to make straw hats and how to make 'hadab' (W3); 'We learned about each other's projects' (W8). Through these visits, participants gained insights into each other's projects and ideas, realizing the potential benefits and profitability of integration, for example: 'I started to be aware of my weaknesses, um, when we went to [Y women homepreneur] I realized that I have weak promotion ways' (W9); 'I visited some for the first time, entered their homes and saw their work, we even learned from their mistakes' (W6); 'I loved [X project] idea and their place' (W1). Participants discovered the integration and interconnectedness of their projects, which they were previously unaware of. They stated: 'when we visited [X women homepreneur] I discovered that we are complementing each other' (W8); 'I entered some women's homes for the first time. we got an idea about each other's work and this is good for cooperation' (W2); 'now we are bonded more and we feel with each other' (W4); 'we got to know each other projects, we are now friends' (W7); 'the most beautiful thing ever, the group is nice even though we did not know each other before, but now we might work together' (W6).

Field visits served as a highlight of the training, greatly appreciated by participants as they witnessed and engaged with other projects firsthand. The participants saw the field trip as an opportunity to develop their knowledge in different aspects. Some commented: 'the trips gave us a unique opportunity to see different aspects of the tourism chain... we saw how different parts, such as accommodation, attractions and transportation, work together to create memorable experiences for tourists' (W4); 'we had so much fun, it was a great outing, they explained to us a lot, everything, marketing, dealing with tourists ... even the cleaning process' (W10); 'we saw decorations made out of salt, it was very nice decorations, we learned how to make it, I might do this in my project' (W8); 'I liked how they [X restaurant] manage the storage area for their kitchen' (W2).

The women participants reflected on the value of field trips in enhancing their skills and knowledge about total quality management, communication, and networking. At the communication skills level, they explained: 'it was nice to see how employees at [X restaurant] deal with the tourists and talk to them' (W3); 'we saw how they [X hotel] deal with the customer and present their services' (W9); 'they talked about how employee should dress neat and clean uniforms' (W5). Regarding the total quality management, participants commented: 'they explained to us how they provide good quality services, um, on what they focus, how to be accurate' (W10); 'they talked a lot about how meeting the health requirements for guests, preventing of mistakes before they provide their service' (W6); 'I liked how he [X employee at a hotel] talked about cleanliness and hygiene in bedrooms and bathrooms'

(W2). These trips also provided some participants with an opportunity to build a network. For example, W1 talked about how field trips helped to build new ties, she stated ‘we want more and more of the trips, we took [X incubator] information to see how they can help me’.

## 5. Discussion

This paper has contributed to the limited literature on the competencies of women homepreneurs and their most suitable learning approach. The study uncovered two clusters of women homepreneurs' competencies, including the knowledge and skills that women homepreneurs need support in (communication skills, entrepreneurship and business growth, financial management and total quality management); and the knowledge and skills they lack (digital transformation, digital marketing and content creation). The study also found that the experiential learning approach combined theory, project visits to participants' ventures, and field trips as an effective approach to support the development of the women's homepreneurs competencies.

Regarding the competencies of women homepreneurs, one of the studies that focused on women entrepreneurs was conducted by Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013). They found four clusters of competencies among women entrepreneurs pursuing business growth, including personal and relationship competencies (e.g., communication and relationship building skills), business and management competencies (e.g., budgeting and managing finance), entrepreneurial competencies (e.g., creativity, visioning, and idea generation), and human relations competencies (e.g., hiring, staff development and leadership). The last two categories do not appear in this study because of its focus on exploring homepreneurs sector and the competencies and they lack or need support in. Some new literature such as those by: Khoo et al. (2024) found that women tourism entrepreneurs lack entrepreneurial digital competencies and need good quality digital training. This is consistent with this study's finding especially the second cluster of the competencies.

Regarding with the first cluster of companies in this study, Rudhumbu et al. (2020) explored the challenges of women entrepreneurs and showed the requirement of those women for some competencies in the knowledge economy such as technical skills, business growth strategies and marketing strategies. The two clusters of homepreneurs competencies produced in the current study are comparable with other studies with new additions to these competencies especially those competencies related to digital transformation, marketing and content. This might be related to the technology revolutions and post-pandemic changes, where digital competencies become crucial for performing entrepreneurial activities. Moreover, Yadav, Paliwal, and Chatradhi and colleagues (2022) underscores the significant challenges rural women entrepreneurs face in adopting digital tools, primarily due to limited access to technology and inadequate training. This aligns with the findings of this study, which highlight the need for targeted support in digital marketing and content creation. The study also emphasizes the importance of public programs and digital inclusion initiatives in equipping women entrepreneurs with the necessary skills to adapt to post-pandemic business environments, validating the focus on digital readiness and adaptability identified in this research. Hence, the inclusion of digital competencies in the second cluster reflects the increasing demand for digital readiness and the ability to navigate online platforms effectively, as highlighted by Liguori and Pittz (2020) and Akpan et al. (2024).

In this study, the learning approach that is most effective to support the development of the women's homepreneurs competencies appears to be the experiential approach combined theory, project visits to participants' ventures, and field trips. This is consistent with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), which emphasizes learning through experience, reflection, and application. Kolb's model advocates for a hands-on approach to learning, aligning well with the practical and immersive elements identified in this study as beneficial for women homepreneurs. Additionally,

Kourilsky and Walstad (2007) found that experiential learning significantly impacts entrepreneurial intention and capability, further supporting the efficacy of this approach for women homepreneurs. Moreover, Motta and Galina (2023), in their systematic review of experiential learning in entrepreneurship education, concluded that such approaches effectively bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Their findings emphasize the importance of immersive methods, such as real-world projects and reflective practices, in developing essential entrepreneurial skills and competences. This aligns with the experiential approach used in this study, which combines theory, project visits, and field trips to address the unique needs of women homepreneurs.

## 6. Implications

### 6.1 Theoretical implications

This study offers several significant theoretical implications for the field of entrepreneurship, particularly focusing on women homepreneurs in the tourism and hospitality sector. It enriches the existing body of literature by highlighting the unique competencies required by women operating home-based businesses in a post-COVID-19 landscape. The findings expand the understanding of entrepreneurial competencies by emphasizing clusters of skills that women homepreneurs need to support their ventures, such as communication, digital transformation, and marketing. These insights contribute to the broader theoretical framework by extending traditional competency categorizations, such as those proposed by Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013), into a contemporary context shaped by digitalization and socio-economic challenges.

Additionally, the study integrates theories of experiential learning with entrepreneurial competency development, aligning well with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984). This theoretical integration suggests that practical approaches to learning, such as project visits and field trips, are highly effective in fostering essential business skills. Furthermore, this study validates recent findings by Motta and Galina (2023), who emphasized the effectiveness of bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application through experiential learning. These theoretical advancements underline the importance of adapting entrepreneurial frameworks to include digital competencies and experiential pedagogies, which are crucial in addressing the demands of the modern entrepreneurial landscape.

Moreover, this study adds to the growing body of research arguing entrepreneurial resilience frameworks, particularly in rural and home-based tourism settings. In doing so, it supports recent arguments on digital inclusion as a prerequisite for sustainable entrepreneurship (e.g., Yadav et al., 2022) and contributes to the theoretical understanding of how women entrepreneurs navigate competency gaps through adaptive learning strategies.

### 6.2 Practical implications

This research provides valuable insights for stakeholders aiming to support women homepreneurs in the tourism and hospitality sector. By identifying key competencies such as digital skills, financial management, and effective communication, the study outlines crucial areas for training and development programs. These insights are particularly relevant in the context of emerging challenges faced by rural women entrepreneurs, as highlighted by Yadav et al. (2022), who emphasize the critical need for digital inclusion initiatives and access to technology.

The findings advocate for the implementation of experiential learning methods, such as project visits, field trips – to allow women to engage with successful entrepreneurs and real-world business settings –, and interactive workshops – where women practice hands-on skills such as digital marketing,

content creation, and customer engagement and to enhance practical business skills –. This aligns with the work of Liguori and Pittz (2020), who highlighted the importance of digital readiness and adaptability for post-pandemic entrepreneurship, and Akpan et al. (2024), who demonstrated the necessity of targeted training for navigating online platforms. By adopting these methods, stakeholders such as policymakers, educational institutions, retailers, and support organizations can design more effective initiatives to empower women homepreneurs.

From a retailer perspective, the findings suggest the importance of fostering partnerships with women homepreneurs to promote locally sourced products and services. Retailers can play a critical role in expanding market access for homepreneurs by incorporating their unique offerings into broader supply chains and supporting their brand visibility through digital platforms. Collaborations between retailers and women homepreneurs can strengthen community-based economies and enhance the sustainability of small, home-based enterprises in rural areas.

Furthermore, policymakers can use these findings to tailor policy interventions that address competency gaps, particularly in digital transformation. Policies focused on digital training programs, financial literacy workshops, and entrepreneurship support schemes can help women homepreneurs build resilience and adaptability in a rapidly changing market. Educational institutions can integrate hands-on, immersive learning approaches into their curricula, ensuring that women homepreneurs acquire the practical skills necessary to navigate both traditional and digital business landscapes.

The emphasis on experiential learning provides a practical roadmap for stakeholders seeking to empower women homepreneurs by enhancing their confidence and business capabilities. These approaches promote sustainable economic growth and community resilience, ensuring that women entrepreneurs in rural areas are better equipped to manage their ventures and leverage emerging opportunities in the tourism and hospitality sector.

### 6.3. Social implications

This study has significant social implications, particularly in its potential to empower women homepreneurs in the tourism and hospitality sector. By identifying and addressing critical competency gaps and promoting experiential learning, the research contributes to broader socio-economic development, especially in rural and underserved communities. Equipping women with essential skills—such as communication, financial management, and digital marketing—enhances their ability to participate in the formal economy. This, in turn, fosters greater self-sufficiency and reduces economic dependency. Furthermore, by strengthening their role in tourism, women can actively preserve and promote cultural heritage through traditional crafts, culinary experiences, and digital content creation. This involvement not only ensures the transfer of knowledge but also supports the sustainability of cultural practices.

## 7. Limitations and future research directions

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size is relatively small, consisting of 10 participants from a specific region (Umm Qais). While this allowed for in-depth exploration of the experiences of women homepreneurs in a rural tourism context, it limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions, industries, or demographic groups. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the research, while providing rich and detailed insights, may not capture the full breadth of experiences and competencies of women homepreneurs in broader contexts. The reliance on self-reported data through interviews also introduces the potential for response bias, as participants may have provided socially desirable answers rather than fully accurate accounts.

Despite these limitations, the study's findings can be applied to other regions in Jordan and neighborhood countries with similar socio-economic and tourism contexts. The challenges and competency gaps identified among women homepreneurs in Umm Qais are likely relevant in other rural tourism destinations in Jordan, such as Petra, Ajloun, and Wadi Rum, where women-led home-based businesses play a crucial role in local economic development. Similarly, comparable issues may be present in neighborhood countries such as Lebanon, Egypt, and Palestine, where rural women entrepreneurs face similar barriers in accessing digital resources, financial management training, and business development opportunities.

Future research should address these limitations by employing larger, more diverse samples, including participants from various geographic, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Quantitative methods, such as surveys or mixed-method approaches, could be incorporated to validate the qualitative findings and improve the generalizability of the results. Longitudinal studies could provide further insights into how the competencies of women homepreneurs evolve over time and assess the long-term effectiveness of experiential learning interventions.

Moreover, future research could extend the scope of this study to examine the competencies of women homepreneurs in industries beyond tourism and hospitality, such as manufacturing, retail, or technology. Investigating the role of digital transformation in shaping entrepreneurial competencies in these sectors would provide valuable insights. Additionally, exploring the effectiveness of specific training programs, particularly those that integrate experiential learning components, in various settings and cultural contexts could refine strategies to support women entrepreneurs globally.

Finally, the study highlights the need for a more segmented sampling strategy to ensure better comparability across participants with similar backgrounds and levels of experience. By adopting such strategies, future research could enhance the reliability and applicability of findings, offering deeper insights into the unique needs and challenges faced by different subgroups of women homepreneurs.

## 8. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive exploration of the competencies required by women homepreneurs in the tourism and hospitality sector, particularly in the face of post-COVID-19 challenges in resource-constrained rural areas such as Umm Qais, Jordan, and the most effective learning approaches to develop these competencies. The researchers used qualitative research methodology, which involved semi-structured interviews with 10 women homepreneurs in Umm Qais. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key competency clusters and learning needs. The study identifies two distinct clusters of competencies: those requiring support (e.g., communication skills, entrepreneurship, financial management, and total quality management) and those entirely lacking (e.g., digital transformation, digital marketing, and content creation). These findings extend the understanding of entrepreneurial competencies by addressing contemporary challenges such as digital readiness and market adaptability, which are critical in today's evolving business landscape. The study also proposed an experiential learning model tailored to rural homepreneurs, which integrated theoretical instruction, project visits, and field trips. This model proved effective in enhancing the participants' skills and boosting their confidence.

Furthermore, this study highlights the socio-economic role of women homepreneurs, particularly in rural communities, it demonstrates how their businesses contribute to local economies, community resilience, and women's empowerment. Addressing competency gaps not only enhances individual business success but also strengthens regional tourism ecosystems.

The study also highlights the effectiveness of experiential learning as a dynamic approach to developing these competencies. The combination of theory, project visits, and field trips, the research aligns with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and validates its practical application in fostering

essential entrepreneurial skills. This approach not only equips women homepreneurs with the tools they need to succeed but also promotes sustainable economic growth and community resilience in rural tourism contexts.

Despite its limitations, including a small sample size and reliance on qualitative methods, the study offers a strong foundation for future research. It emphasizes the need for larger, more diverse samples and mixed-method approaches to enhance generalizability. Additionally, it calls for further exploration of women homepreneurs' competencies in different industries and cultural contexts, as well as longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of experiential learning interventions.

This research provides actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and support organizations. By addressing the digital competency gaps and promoting tailored training programs, stakeholders can empower women homepreneurs to navigate post-pandemic challenges and leverage emerging opportunities. As digital transformation continues to reshape the entrepreneurial landscape, ongoing research and targeted interventions will be essential in ensuring the success and resilience of women-led home-based enterprises in the tourism and hospitality sector.

## References

1. Akpan, I. J., Effiom, L., & Akpanobong, A. C. (2024). Towards developing a knowledge base for small business survival techniques during COVID-19 and sustainable growth strategies for the post-pandemic era. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 36(6), 921-943.
2. Arcodia, C., Abreu Novais, M., Cavlek, N., & Humpe, A. (2021). Educational tourism and experiential learning: Students' perceptions of field trips. *Tourism Review*, 76(1), 241-254.
3. Alsharif, A., Isa, S. M., & Alqudah, M. N. (2024). Smart Tourism, Hospitality, and Destination: A Systematic Review and Future Directions. *Journal of Tourism & Services*, 15(29), 72-110. <https://doi.org/10.29036/jots.v15i29.746>
4. Alsharif, A.H., Md Salleh, N.Z., Pilelienė, L. & Al-Zahrani, S.A. (2023). Exploring the Tourism, Neuro-tourism, and Hospitality Nexus: A Comprehensive Bibliometric Analysis. *Journal of Tourism & Services*, 14(27), 197-221. doi: 10.29036/jots.v14i27.606
5. Baral, R., Dey, C., Manavazhagan, S., & Kamalini, S. (2023). Women entrepreneurs in India: a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 15(1), 94-121. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-05-2021-0079>
6. Bradley, E., Curry, L., & Devers, K. (2007). Qualitative data analysis for health services research: developing taxonomy, themes, and theory. *Health services research*, 42(4), 1758-1772. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6773.2006.00684.x>
7. Basaran, K. (2016). *Experiential learning in tourism education in North Cyprus* (Acta Electronica Universitatis Tampensis; No. 1663). Tampere University Press. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-03-0112-5>
8. Beard, C., & Wilson, J. (2018). *Experiential learning: A practical guide for training, coaching and education*. Kogan Page Publishers
9. Bell, D. (2016). Twenty-first century education: Transformative education for sustainability and responsible citizenship. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, 18(1), 48-56. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jtes-2016-0004>
10. Caulfield, J. (2023). How to design and teach a hybrid course: Achieving student-centered learning through blended classroom, online and experiential activities. Taylor & Francis.
11. Christian, D. D., McCarty, D. L., & Brown, C. L. (2021). Experiential education during the COVID-19 pandemic: A reflective process. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 34(3), 264-277.
12. Cohen, E. (2003). Contemporary tourism and the host community in less developed areas. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 28(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2003.11081381>

13. Cooper, S., & Lucas, W. (2006). Developing self-efficacy for innovation and entrepreneurship: An educational approach. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, 4(1), 141-162.
14. Cornelius-White, J., & Harbaugh, A. (2009). *Learner-centered instruction: Building relationships for student success*. Sage publications.
15. Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.
16. Dsouza, A., & Panakaje, N. (2023). Factors Affecting Women Entrepreneurs' Success: A Study of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises-A Review. *International Journal of Case Studies in Business, IT and Education (IJCSBE)*, 7(2), 51-89
17. Estes, C. (2004). Promoting student-centered learning in experiential education. *Journal of experiential education*, 27(2), 141-160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105382590402700203>
18. Evans, D. N. (2023). A Qualitative Exploratory Case Study of Teachers' Perceptions Regarding the Implementation of Learner-Centered Pedagogy in Indian Elementary Schools (Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University).
19. Fayolle, A., & Gailly, B. (2015). The impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial attitudes and intention: Hysteresis and persistence. *Journal of small business management*, 53(1), 75-93. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jsbm.12065>
20. Furman, N., & Sibthorp, J. (2013). Leveraging experiential learning techniques for transfer. *New directions for adult and continuing education*, 2013(137), 17-26. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.20041>
21. Giddy, J., Rogerson, C., & Rogerson, J. (2022). Rural tourism firms in the COVID-19 environment: South African challenges. *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*, 41(2), 343-353. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.41202-836>
22. Gnyawali, D., & Fogel, D. (1994). Environments for entrepreneurship development: key dimensions and research implications. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 18(4), 43-62.
23. Gravani, M. N., Slade, B., Brown, M., Jögi, L., & Borg, C. (2024). From Learner-Centered Education (LCE) to Emancipatory Learner-Centered Education (ELCE): A comparative case study of language education for adult migrants in four European countries. *Prospects*, 54(1), 175-190.
24. Guetterman, T. C. (2015). Descriptions of sampling practices within five approaches to qualitative research in education and the health sciences. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 16(2), Art. 25
25. Haryanto, T. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic and international tourism demand. *JDE (Journal of Developing Economies)*, 5(1), 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jde.v5i1.19767>
26. Hawtrey, K. (2007). Using experiential learning techniques. *The Journal of Economic Education*, 38(2), 143-152. <https://doi.org/10.3200/JECE.38.2.143-152>
27. Hoang, S.D., Dey, S.K., Tuckova, Z. (2023). Exploring the Impacts of Virtual Reality Technology in Sustainable Tourism during the Covid -19. *Transformations in Business & Economics*, 22 (1), 65-86.
28. Holton, J. (2007). The coding process and its challenges. *The Sage handbook of grounded theory*, 3, pp.265-289.
29. Huseynli, E. (2022). Sustainable tourism and its environmental, economic, and social benefits to the host destinations. *Tourism and Leisure*.
30. Jeyacheya, J., & Hampton, M. P. (2020). Wishful thinking or wise policy? Theorising tourism-led inclusive growth: Supply chains and host communities. *World Development*, 131, 104960. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.104960>
31. Jumriani, J., Abbas, E. W., Rajiani, I., Hadi, S., Muhaimin, M., Mutiani, M., & Rafsanjani, A.I. (2022). The Utilization of Traditional Cuisine as A Tourist Attraction on The River Banks. *Global Journal of Entrepreneurship and Management*, , 3(1):23-29. <https://doi.org/10.57585/GJEM.022.011>

32. Kaberia, S., & Muathe, S. (2021). Effect of COVID-19 pandemic on performance of women-owned micro, small, and medium enterprises in Kenya. *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 9(1), 7-18. <https://doi.org/10.11114/ijsss.v9i1.5089>
33. Keiler, L. (2018). Teachers' roles and identities in student-centered classrooms. *International journal of STEM education*, 5, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-018-0131-6>
34. Khan, A. N., Ali, A., Khan, H. U., & Hameed, Z. (2021). The role of entrepreneurial orientation in developing women entrepreneurs in Pakistan: A study of social and cultural barriers. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 10(11). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-021-00145-9>
35. Khatami, F., Ferraris, A., Palmucci, D. N., & Dabić, M. (2024). Impact analysis of the digital entrepreneurial ecosystem to improve the tourism industry and social sustainability. *Journal of Tourism & Services*, 15(29), 176-205. <https://doi.org/10.29036/jots.v15i29.831>
36. Khoo, C., Yang, E., Tan, R., Alonso-Vazquez, M., Ricaurte-Quijano, C., Pécot, M., & Barahona-Canales, D. (2024). Opportunities and challenges of digital competencies for women tourism entrepreneurs in Latin America: a gendered perspective. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 32(3), 519-539. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2023.2189622>
37. Kirsten, C. (2018). The role of financial management training in developing skills and financial self-efficacy. *The Southern African Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management*, 10(1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajesbm.v10i1.211>
38. Kolb, A., & Kolb, D. (2017). Experiential learning theory as a guide for experiential educators in higher education. *Experiential Learning & Teaching in Higher Education*, 1(1), 7-44.
39. Kolb, A., Kolb, D., Passarelli, A., & Sharma, G. (2014). On becoming an experiential educator: The educator role profile. *Simulation & gaming*, 45(2), 204-234. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046878114534383>
40. Kolb, D. (2014). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. FT press.
41. Kolb, D., Boyatzis, R., & Mainemelis, C. (2014). Experiential learning theory: Previous research and new directions. In *Perspectives on thinking, learning, and cognitive styles* (pp. 227-247). Routledge
42. Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2009). Experiential learning theory: A dynamic, holistic approach to management learning, education, and development. *The SAGE handbook of management learning, education, and development* (pp. 42-68). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857021038.n3>
43. Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2006). Learning styles and learning spaces: A review of the multidisciplinary application of experiential learning theory in higher education. In *Learning styles and learning: A key to meeting the accountability demands in education* (pp. 45-91). Nova Science Publishers.
44. Lama, R., & Rai, A. (2021). Challenges in developing sustainable tourism post COVID-19 pandemic. In *Tourism destination management in a post-pandemic context* (pp. 233-244). Emerald Publishing Limited.
45. Lévesque, M., & Stephan, U. (2020). It's time we talk about time in entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 44(2), 163-184. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1042258719839711>
46. Lu, H. F. (2021). Enhancing university student employability through practical experiential learning in the sport industry: An industry-academia cooperation case from Taiwan. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 28, 100301.
47. Malik, S., Alkhalidi, A., Salamzadeh, A., & Mantas, C. (2024). A systematic literature review on home-based businesses: two decades of research. *Journal of Family Business Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFBM-03-2024-0062>
48. Milano, C., & Gascón, J. (2024). Community based tourism: A global south perspective. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 20(3), 27-37. <https://doi.org/10.18089/tms.20240303>

49. Mitchelmore, S., & Rowley, J. (2013). Entrepreneurial competencies of women entrepreneurs pursuing business growth. *Journal of small business and enterprise development*, 20(1), 125-142. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14626001311298448>
50. Monterrubio, C. (2022). The informal tourism economy, COVID-19 and socioeconomic vulnerability in Mexico. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 14(1), 20-34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2021.2017726>
51. Motta, V. F., & Galina, S. V. R. (2023). Experiential learning in entrepreneurship education: A systematic literature review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 121, 103919.
52. Mura, L., & Kajzar, P. (2019). Small Businesses in Cultural Tourism in a Central European Country. *Journal of Tourism & Services*, 10(19). <https://doi.org/10.29036/jots.v10i19.110>
53. Murdoch, K., & Wilson, J. (2008). *Creating a learner-centred primary classroom: Learner-centered strategic teaching*. Routledge.
54. Oggero, N., Rossi, M. C., & Ughetto, E. (2020). Entrepreneurial spirits in women and men. The role of financial literacy and digital skills. *Small Business Economics*, 55, 313-327. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-019-00299-7>
55. Pattanayak, K., & Padhy, C. (2022). Entrepreneurs' Contributions to Economic Development and Growth. *Indian Journal of Natural Sciences*, 13(71), 41632-41637.
56. Pham, T., Dwyer, L., Su, J., & Ngo, T. (2021). COVID-19 impacts of inbound tourism on Australian economy. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 88, 103179. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2021.103179>
57. Polukhina, A., Sheresheva, M., Efremova, M., Suranova, O., Agalakova, O., & Antonov-Ovseenko, A. (2021). The concept of sustainable rural tourism development in the face of COVID-19 crisis: Evidence from Russia. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 14(1), 38. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm14010038>
58. Quisumbing, L. R. (2005). Education for the world of work and citizenship: towards sustainable future societies. *Prospects*, 35(3), 289-301
59. Rout, L. P., Panda, S., & Panda, L. (2022). An empirical study on the effect of digitalisation on homepreneurs. In *2nd International Conference on Sustainability and Equity (ICSE-2021)* (pp. 89-94). Atlantis Press.
60. Rudhumbu, N., Du Plessis, E., & Maphosa, C. (2020). Challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in Botswana: revisiting the role of entrepreneurship education. *Journal of International Education in Business*, 13(2), 183-201. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIEB-12-2019-0058>
61. Salim, M. A., Shariffuddin, N. S. M., Eppang, B. M., Widjaja, H. R., Azinuddin, M., Mat Som, A. P., Madkhali, H., & Alotaibi, S. (2024). Navigating uncertainty through resilience, absorptive capacity and adaptive performance in shaping SME exit intentions in the tourism industry. *Journal of Tourism & Services*, 15(29). <https://doi.org/10.29036/jots.v15i29.909>
62. Shah Ph, D., & Kumar, R. (2020). Learner Centred Teaching and Related Instructional Practices. Shah, RK (2020). Learner Centred Teaching and Related Instructional Practices. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 8(12), 2830-2838.
63. Sharma, S., Dogra, J., & Khan, S. (2024). Destination resilience and transformations in the tourism sector: new tendencies in destination development and management. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 20(4), 17-26. <https://doi.org/10.18089/tms.20240402>
64. Škare, M., Soriano, D. R., & Porada-Rochoń, M. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on the travel and tourism industry. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 163, 120469. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.120469>
65. Streimikiene, D., Svagzdiene, B., Jasinskas, E., & Simanavicius, A. (2021). Sustainable tourism development and competitiveness: The systematic literature review. *Sustainable development*, 29(1), 259-271. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.2133>

66. Susanti, E., Mulyanti, R. Y., & Wati, L. N. (2023a). MSMEs performance and competitive advantage: Evidence from women's MSMEs in Indonesia. *Cogent Business & Management*, 10(2), 2239423. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2023.2239423>
67. Susanti, E., Mulyanti, R. Y., & Wati, L. N. (2023b). Systematic Literature Review: Increasing Performance of Women MSMEs Through Competitive Advantage Based on Digital Transformation and Innovation. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Global Innovation and Trends in Economics and Business (ICOBIS 2022)* (Vol. 230, p. 25). Springer Nature.
68. Towner, N. (2016). Community participation and emerging surfing tourism destinations: A case study of the Mentawai Islands. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 20(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775085.2016.1151819>
69. Van den Broeck, A., Ferris, D., Chang, C., & Rosen, C. (2016). A review of self-determination theory's basic psychological needs at work. *Journal of management*, 42(5), 1195-1229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316632058>
70. Xie, Z.H., Jia, P.Y., Song, J., Zhao, R.D., Jin, H. (2024). Evaluation of the Tourism Economic Spatial Network Structure of the Urban Agglomerations in the Middle Reaches of the Yellow River Based on a Modified Gravity Model. *Transformations in Business & Economics*, 23 (2), 319-342.
71. Wolfe, R. E., & Poon, J. D. (2015). *Educator Competencies for Personalized, Learner-Centered Teaching*. Jobs For the Future. <https://www.jff.org>
72. Yadav, H., Paliwal, M., & Chatradhi, N. (2022). Entrepreneurship development of rural women through digital inclusion: examining the contributions of Public Programs. In *Inclusive Businesses in Developing Economies: Converging People, Profit, and Corporate Citizenship* (pp. 287-309). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
73. Zaazou, Z., & Salman Abdou, D. (2022). Egyptian small and medium sized enterprises' battle against COVID-19 pandemic: March–July 2020. *Journal of Humanities and Applied Social Sciences*, 4(2), 94-112. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHASS-09-2020-0161>
74. Zintgraff, C., & Hirumi, A. (2023). Aligning Learner-Centered Design Philosophy, Theory, Research, and Practice. In *Learning, Design, and Technology: An International Compendium of Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* (pp. 33-73). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
75. Ziyadin, S., Borodin, A., Streltsova, E., Suieubayeva, S., & Pshembayeva, D. (2019). Fuzzy logic approach in the modeling of sustainable tourism development management. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 19(1), 492-504. <https://doi.org/10.17512/pjms.2019.19.1.37>

### Brief description of Authors:

#### Ayman Harb

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1725-5707>

Affiliation: Department of Hotel Management, School of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Jordan, Aqaba, Jordan

Email: [a.harb@ju.edu.jo](mailto:a.harb@ju.edu.jo)

Dr. Harb is an Associate Professor of Hospitality and Tourism Management at the University of Jordan, Tourism and Hospitality School, Aqaba Branch, with expertise in sustainable tourism and hospitality, entrepreneurship, human capital development, and tourism education and training. He has also served as the Dean of the Tourism and Hospitality School at the University of Jordan, Aqaba Branch. His work focuses on fostering entrepreneurship and advancing sustainable tourism practices within the tourism and hospitality sectors.

#### Wejdan Alakaleek

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5089-8347>

Affiliation: Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business, Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan

Email: [w.alakaleek@hu.edu.jo](mailto:w.alakaleek@hu.edu.jo)

Dr. Wejdan Alakaleek is an Associate Professor of Business Administration at the Business School, Department of Business Administration, at Hashemite University. Her academic expertise focuses on business administration, with research interests spanning entrepreneurship and management.

### **Suzy Hatough-Bouran**

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9347-1425>

Affiliation: Tamkeen for Sustainable Tourism Development, Amman, Jordan

Email: [shatoughbouran@gmail.com](mailto:shatoughbouran@gmail.com)

Dr. Suzy Hatough Bouran is an expert in tourism education and sustainability. She serves as a TedQual Program Certification Auditor at UN Tourism. Dr. Hatough Bouran is also a Board Director of Tamkeen for Sustainable Tourism Development, where she leads initiatives to promote responsible tourism and sustainable practices.

### **Ahmed Freewan**

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7017-4485>

Affiliation: Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture and Design, Jordan University of Science and Technology,

Email: [aafreewan@just.edu.jo](mailto:aafreewan@just.edu.jo)

Dr. Freewan is a professor, specializing in green design and sustainability with a strong focus on community sustainability development. He currently serves as the Dean of the School of Architecture at Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST). Dr. Aafreewan's work integrates sustainable architecture with innovative design practices and community-focused solutions.

### **Abdallah Yousef Al-harashseh**

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4269-4658>

Affiliation: The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research-Jordan, Amman, Jordan

Email: [abdhara2000@gmail.com](mailto:abdhara2000@gmail.com)

Dr. Abdullah Yousef Al-Harashseh currently serves as the Cultural Attaché at the Jordanian Embassy in Cairo. He is dedicated to promoting educational tourism in Jordanian universities, attracting international students, and highlighting Jordan's competitive advantage in educational tourism. Previously, he worked as an international advisor in the Kingdom of Bahrain, focusing on educational tourism, and served as Secretary-General and a lecturer at the University of Bahrain. He has held several supervisory positions in higher education policymaking in Jordan, including serving as an advisor to the Minister and as Secretary of the Higher Education Council, the highest authority for higher education in Jordan. Dr. Al-Harashseh holds a Ph.D. in Business Administration, has published research studies, and has actively participated in international conferences on business development, educational tourism, and strategic planning for higher education and its institutions.

### **Hadeel Al-Maaitah**

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2133-8134>

Affiliation: Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business, Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan

Email: [hadeel@hu.edu.jo](mailto:hadeel@hu.edu.jo)

Dr. Hadeel Al-Maaitah is an Assistant Professor of Business Administration at the Business School, Department of Business Administration, and currently serves as the Chairperson of the Department.

With a career spanning 29 years, she has developed a deep passion for economic empowerment, particularly for women and youth, and for driving innovation. Dr. Al Maaitah founded the Center for Women's Studies in the Community (CWSC) at The Hashemite University, where she served as director for 7 years.