

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

### RIVALRY AND FEMALE SORORITY IN HOSTING COMPANIES OF TOLUCA, MEXICO

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Gender relations (referring to power relations) both intergeneric and intrageneric play an important role in society, because not only are they present in the evolution and transformation of norms and values, but also, they are immersed in everyday life of people. The analysis that has been carried out in these contexts has been done from intergeneric relations (woman-man). The object of study is linked to the situation and the different conditions that women live; that is, what roles have been assigned to them, the oppression against them, as well as the conditions of inequality and sociocultural obstacles to occupy higher-ranking positions in the workplace. On the other hand, studies on intrageneric relations in tourism have been less, especially when it is related to relations between the female gender (woman-woman). For this reason, it is essential to adopt an approach that considers the way in which women experience and live their participation in tourism (Díaz, 2010) from these types of relations.

According to the incorporation of women in the sector, tourism generates millions of jobs for them worldwide, the majority of tourism staff is composed by women (UNWTO, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019). For example, in Latin America, the female workforce in hotels and restaurants sector represented 58.5% and, in the Caribbean, 53.4% (OMT y ONU Mujeres, 2013). In Mexico, the participation of women in the economic activity of services was 53.7% (INEGI, 2018). In the State of Mexico, it represented 54.5% (Gobierno del Estado de México, 2018).

Hotels were considered in this study because they are tourism companies where the gender division is evident (Sarosi, 2017; Mejía *et al.*, 2017; Escudero *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, they are environments that allow us to study performance, understood as the act, the representation of bodies and gender among the female collective. It is important to mention that the development of the activity and the incorporation of women in tourist employment have generated changes, they have accelerated the process of diversification

of the family economy and of the social composition of the population and, they have influenced the relationships between genders. In the case of women, their lives are marked by patriarchal ideas: competition, exclusion, discrimination and all forms of oppression. However, this situation is not only reflected between different genders (male-female), but also in the interaction between the same gender (woman-woman). For example, the social relationship between women stands out in aspects of competition, rivalry, dispute. Nevertheless, situations of sorority, sisterhood and the fight for the common good are identified. This is not only experienced in Mexico, but also it is manifested in nations with similar contexts where the patriarchal system is dominant.

This research takes into account intrageneric relations (between women), the historical relationship between them based on their enmity, where the common is annulled and only what separates them remains, which keeps women in solitary dispute. Incapable and without the possibility of an alliance and agreement or with the option of incorporating sorority in the spaces of the tourist sector where they play a role? Sorority is considered an alliance option, which is based on a relationship of friendship, sisterhood, where as a woman, you learn and teach. That is, with female friends, women are accompanied with people with whom they can build. In addition, in this kind of sorority interactions, the relationships between them are modified to achieve favourable social relationships for each one of the female groups.

Sorority is a recent topic, the word entered the RAE online dictionary in 2018. The proposal of Marcela Lagarde (2006) who incorporated this concept in Spanish also stands out. In general, this term is increasingly relevant (BBC Mundo, 2018). An example of this is what happens on social networks with the hashtags #Ibelieveyou, #metoo and #sororitips. It seeks to give women a voice and is a way of identifying and helping each other. A case in tourism is what happens with the maids, housekeepers, those who clean the hotels or the Kellys, who have made their voices heard about their conditions and work situation through the creation of associations in different places in Spain (Cañada, 2015) to stop being invisible (Las Kellys, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018).

Based on the above, the research that supports this work takes place in the hosting companies of Toluca, Mexico with the aim of analyzing gender relations, mainly intrageneric (between women), based on the link between the dimensions of the gender perspective: culture, power and body.

For this article, a qualitative analysis was chosen. The field work was carried out from June to November 2018. In the first instance, the study was limited to hotels with one to five stars in Toluca, Mexico. Subsequently, it was taken into account that the owners or managers of each hotel authorized their participation in the investigation. Then, based on the Lodging Directory of the State of Mexico (Sector Edo. Méx., 2018), 26 accommodations that meet the first criteria of the category are registered in Toluca. However, according to the second element (authorization), only thirteen hotels participated in the study, because the rest of the companies, due to their privacy policies, were unable to provide information about their employees (salary, type of positions), nor did they allow interviews with the work staff.

Then, a questionnaire was applied to each General Manager or Human Resources Manager of the 13 hotels that participated in this study, to know the distribution of the

staff. Later, we used ethnographic method techniques (semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, participant and non-participant observation) because it is a field method that is carried out in the environments of the people to be studied and with whom you have face-to-face contact. In this context, statistical representation was not sought, but rather diverse and rich information on social relations between women. The sample consisted of 26 semi-structured interviews (18 women and 8 men). With this number of interviews (for both women and men), the level of information saturation was reached.

Tourism, in this case from a tourist company (hotel), has the filter role. There, men and women carry out a performance that, as can be seen: 1) women play traditional roles, concentrating mainly in positions related to what is “proper” for the feminine and, to a lesser extent, in positions of higher hierarchy; 2) the relationship between them is associated with “historical enmity”; 3) although one starts from sociocultural constructions that are recreated by a body, one seeks unconsciously or not, an alliance, that support that is taken for granted and will be; 4) this represents an opportunity for companies to make policies from a gender perspective and 5) women identify with each other, relationships of sisterhood can be generated.

On the issue of intrageneric relations, women are not only in dispute and it is “difficult” to work with a team made up of them, but situations linked to sorority also arise; that is sisterhood between them, where the common is not annulled but on the contrary, it is lived, created, transmitted and recreated. This will depend, on the one hand, on the distribution of personnel in each work area, in the sense that it can be seen when the work team is made up of women, such as the housekeeper area. In addition, since women are the ones who make up the staff of the tourism sector, it becomes a space to study the performance that is carried out and the types of intrageneric relations that are presented. The intention of this study has been to analyze what those relationships are like. It was observed how the body, in this case of women, based on culture and power, not only lives but also transmits gender constructions, ways of life, and how in spaces (hotels) where they play a role as worker, they do not stop carrying out activities related to their gender.

Although in this coexistence and concentration of women in a position reflects attitudes of “dispute”, it also becomes an area of opportunity to break with the mandates as the patriarchy, this allows observing and demonstrating that a team of women have favourable results not only operational (e.g. having rooms ready) but also in results that can influence the policies of companies to work from a gender perspective, mainly referring to equity, which although it is not an issue that it is addressed in the text, if it is a line of research that is encouraged to follow.

In the companies of this study, it was observed that social relations between women are associated with conflicts, but also in some cases they incorporate elements of sisterhood, such as companionship and friendship. However, more work is required to achieve alliances between them and that these pacts are born from and for the benefit of women. Such as the case of the Spanish context, with the formation of federations and associations led by women.

Also, it is important to mention that in this possibility of women meeting other women, of looking at them turned into them, it is a path that influences so that the similarities with others are recognized and the gap of the uncommon is reduced; that is, to recognize your

own limitations and possibilities to continue building with other women, will it be a stage that will lead us to a new form of social relations?

To sum up, if you start from sociocultural constructions or from the will to power, what gender content do you want to have and build? In this context, in the sorority that arises in the hotel industry there is the possibility of contributing to disarticulate, in addition to the historical enmity woman-woman, the patriarchal oppression between the male-female genders.