

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER IN AN INNOVATIVE TOURISM COMPANY: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a global phenomenon that fosters economic growth, poverty reduction, and community development (Mero Fuentes and Palma de la Cruz, 2021). Furthermore, prior to the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was one of the world's leading economic activities, accounting for approximately 7% of the share of trade and ranking as the third-largest export sector following the petroleum and chemical industries (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2014).

As a result, over the past two decades, tourism has merited specific analysis, including examinations of innovation (Montresor, 2018). The literature had also consistently expressed a scarcity of studies that addressed not only tourism innovation in a meaningful and specific manner (Pikkemaat and Weiermair, 2007; Orfila-Sintes and Mattsson, 2009; Pivcevic and Pranicevic, 2012) but also its modernization and expansion into related topics (Pikkemaat *et al.*, 2019). This is primarily because companies in this industry face unique challenges and processes in each of their segments and activities (Camisón and Monfort-Mir, 2012; Hjalager, 2010; Krizaj *et al.*, 2014).

Additionally, overcoming the economic crisis in the tourism industry caused by the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates a reevaluation of innovation (Simancas Cruz *et al.*, 2020) and its alignment with sustainability, public health, and safety (Bauzá Martorell, *et al.*, 2020).

On the other hand, the role of women in the economy has evolved over recent decades, altering and increasing their presence in various social and economic activities (Sonzogni, 2020). Nonetheless, their progress is still hindered by social stereotypes that are also

perpetuated in the tourism industry (Díaz Carrión and Kido, 2017; Serrano Barquín *et al.*, 2019).

Similarly, a substantial number of previous studies compiled by Minniti (2009) have demonstrated that the phenomenon of entrepreneurship has a gender component that could also extend to the realm of innovation. Indeed, 30% of the countries in the GEM report (Peña-Legazkue *et al.*, 2019), conducted between 2018 and 2019, reported that men were more likely to undertake innovative businesses than women, despite women being more likely to describe their businesses as innovative (Elam *et al.*, 2019).

The tourism industry, as one of the hardest-hit sectors by the economic crisis stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, reaffirms the need for innovative initiatives to adapt to the social changes that have occurred (social distancing, concerns about potential contagion, increased hygiene and health measures, etc.). Thus, the academic debate about the significance of gender in entrepreneurship is also linked to the discussion about its innovation capacity.

Therefore, this leads to the following research question: Is the gender of the entrepreneur in the tourism industry a determining factor for innovation within the sector? This question inherently combines four variables simultaneously: innovation, tourism, entrepreneurship, and gender.

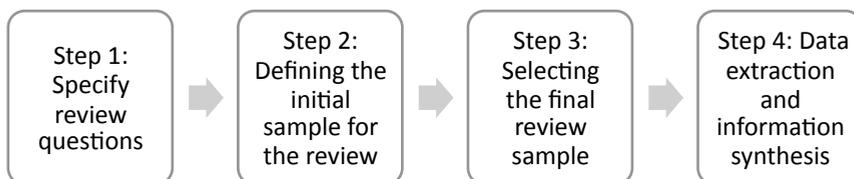
A literature review serves as a valuable starting point to attempt to answer this question as it may reveal inconsistencies in the current body of knowledge, synthesize diverse findings, and generally offer other researchers' insight into the state of the art in this field (Palmatier *et al.*, 2018), making it an essential consideration for advancing a research agenda (Fink, 2019).

2. OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of this work is, through a systematic literature review (hereafter, SLR), to summarize and categorize the existing knowledge regarding the role of gender in innovation among entrepreneurs in the tourism industry.

To carry out the systematic review of the literature, the steps established by Moher *et al.*, 2009, in the PRISMA (Preferred Reported Items For Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses) statement were followed.

ILLUSTRATION 1. STEPS FOLLOWED IN THE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW PROCESS



Font: Al-Tabbaa *et al.*, (2019)

The PRISMA statement comprises a checklist with items designed to assist authors in enhancing the way they report their systematic reviews, thus serving as a valuable tool for appraising articles built upon them (Moher *et al.*, 2009).

3. RESULTS

In the Web of Science electronic database (hereafter WoS), a search was conducted within the topic using the following string of words or key terms: (touris* AND innovat* AND entrepreneur* AND gender). This search yielded a total of 21 results, with slightly over 66% of them published within the past five years. After applying the PRISMA statement, the inclusion for analysis was reduced to 7 records.

In the Scopus electronic database, the same keyword string was used, and the search was conducted within the title, abstract, or keywords of the records. Out of the 12 results obtained, 9 of them turned out to be duplicates from those provided by WoS, and the remaining were excluded according to the predefined exclusion criteria.

The manual search and snowballing process, employing the same procedure, resulted in 6 documents, with 1 being excluded after applying the predefined exclusion criteria.

Therefore, a total of 15 studies were included for analysis following the PICOS framework (Moher *et al.*, 2009; Qiu and Wang, 2016). Among the 15 records analyzed, it appears possible to conclude that in 9 of them, representing 60% of the total, gender acts as a bias when observing innovation among those who venture into the tourism industry. Within this 60% of references supporting the existence of a gender bias in innovation among tourism entrepreneurs, 3 references (Montañés-Del-Río & Medina-Garrido, 2020; Montañés Del Río, 2017; Montañés Del Río, *et al.*, 2019) quantitatively identify a greater likelihood of innovation among women compared to men when they venture into the tourism industry.

This result might represent an exception, within the tourism industry, to the notion that innovation is considered a gender-neutral aspect of entrepreneurship (Pérez-Quintana, 2020), and, therefore, should not be associated with being a woman or a man.

In 5 of the records (Baylina *et al.*, 2019; Elam *et al.*, 2019; Lindberg *et al.*, 2014; World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2021; and Pallarès-Blanch *et al.*, 2015), which make up 33.33% of the analyzed works, there is no conclusive evidence regarding whether gender can determine a higher or lower capacity, inclination, or presence of innovation in the businesses of those who venture or have ventured into the tourism industry.

Only 1 record, Manosalvas Vaca *et al.* (2020), has identified the absence of gender influence on the innovation of individual tourism entrepreneurs.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This paper links concept that have traditionally been analyzed separately. There are studies on innovation, entrepreneurship, gender, and tourism, but they have been rarely addressed holistically. Therefore, the challenge this work faces lies in the integration of concepts that have received limited attention in the literature. This issue became evident when conducting the systematic literature review on the state of the art.

Furthermore, given the current health and economic situation stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an additional difficulty in addressing these issues in an already heavily impacted sector. The pandemic is leading to a paradigm shift that goes beyond technical and operational aspects, encompassing the values and culture of companies.

In this scenario, there is an urgent need for businesses in the tourism industry to react proactively and respond to the challenge with increased innovation, not limited solely to the technical realm but also encompassing organizational and entrepreneurial aspects. Considering that the capacity to innovate is fundamental for entrepreneurial development, the focus of this work goes beyond by aiming to link these concepts - innovation and entrepreneurship in the tourism industry - with that of gender. Despite the lack of consensus regarding this relationship, it is generally accepted that the tourism industry is attractive to entrepreneurs, and more specifically, gender promotes entrepreneurship as it involves risk-taking. Moreover, there is a positive albeit weak relationship between the gender of entrepreneurs and innovation, with claims that women in this industry possess a high innovative potential.

However, based on the results obtained from this systematic literature review, it becomes evident that these concepts have been inadequately explored collectively. This, in turn, highlights the need to continue addressing these issues and advancing knowledge in this area.