

Women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector: A systematic review of the literature on determinants, challenges, and dynamics of business development

Alejandro Valencia-Arias ¹ , Maria Camila Bermeo-Giraldo ² , Ada Gallegos ³ ,
Gustavo Adolfo Moreno López ⁴ , Sebastián Arias García ² , Lucía Palacios Moya ⁵ 

¹ University of Los Lagos, Colombia

² Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences, Colombia

³ Institute for Research on Women's Studies, Peru

⁴ Marco Fidel Suárez University Institution, Colombia

⁵ Escolme Research Center, Colombia

Corresponding author: Alejandro Valencia-Arias | javalenciar@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9434-6923>

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ABSTRACT

The subject of women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector has attracted increasing academic interest due to its contribution to economic development, social inclusion and territorial revitalisation. In a variety of geographic contexts, women are involved in the establishment and administration of initiatives related to tourism services, particularly in rural areas and emerging destinations where tourism serves as a means for economic diversification and the enhancement of local development. However, the scientific knowledge of this phenomenon is dispersed across different disciplinary approaches and empirical contexts, thus hindering an integrated understanding of the entrepreneurial dynamics that characterise women's participation in the sector. In order to organise and systematise the available evidence, this study presents a systematic literature review based on the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The study utilised a structured procedure for identifying, selecting, and analysing research indexed in academic databases. The resulting synthesis demonstrates that female entrepreneurship in tourism can be interpreted as a process shaped by the interaction between institutional conditions, social dynamics, and entrepreneurial capabilities. This highlights its contribution to local development and its potential to promote more inclusive and sustainable tourism models. Furthermore, the synthesis offers an analytical framework that guides future research and supports the design of policies and strategies aimed at strengthening women's economic participation in the tourism sector.

Keywords: Women's entrepreneurship, Tourism, Business development, Gender and entrepreneurship, Sustainable tourism.

INTRODUCTION

The field of academic research is increasingly focusing on women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector due to its significant contribution to economic development, social inclusion, and territorial revitalization (Kareem et al., 2025; Tiur Ida Silalahi et al., 2025). In a variety of geographic contexts, women are actively involved in the establishment and administration of tourism initiatives, particularly in rural areas and emerging destinations, where tourism is being utilised to diversify local economies. These initiatives encompass a variety of offerings, including small-scale accommodations, local gastronomy services, cultural activities, and experiences grounded in natural and community heritage. In this context, women's entrepreneurship has been demonstrated to generate income and employment, whilst concomitantly promoting processes of economic and social empowerment by strengthening women's participation in decision-making and in the productive dynamics of their communities (Hazudin et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2025).

From an economic perspective, tourism has been shown to have a high capacity to stimulate regional growth, attract investment, and generate productive linkages with sectors such as agriculture, crafts, and culture in this context, women entrepreneurs contribute to the valorisation of local resources, the diversification of the tourism offering, and the adoption of sustainable practices (Tiur Ida Silalahi et al., 2025). Moreover, academic analysis of women's entrepreneurship in tourism enables the identification of factors associated with the establishment and consolidation of women-led businesses, as well as the structural and contextual challenges that condition their development (Hazudin et al., 2025; Kareem et al., 2025). Consequently, the study of this phenomenon contributes to a better understanding of the dynamics of business development in tourism and to generating evidence for the design of policies and strategies aimed at strengthening an inclusive, innovative, and sustainable tourism sector (Nguyen et al., 2025).

Despite the growing academic interest in the field, the extant knowledge presents limitations related to theoretical articulation and empirical systematization (Batra & Batra, 2026; Rodríguez-Vera et al., 2025). The extant literature reveals a dispersed production across diverse geographic, institutional, and socioeconomic contexts, resulting in relevant but fragmented studies with little conceptual integration (Chhabra et al., 2025). In many cases, research focuses on specific scenarios, such as rural or community-based tourism, or tourism in developing economies, without establishing clear relationships between the factors that influence women's entrepreneurial development within the sector (Stylianou et al., 2025).

Furthermore, a significant proportion of the extant scientific literature addresses this phenomenon from partial perspectives, focusing on dimensions such as access to financing, sociocultural constraints, the balance between family and business responsibilities, and opportunities linked to sustainable tourism (Batra & Batra, 2026; Rodríguez-Vera et al., 2025). Despite the identification of numerous contributing factors in these studies, the absence of comprehensive analytical frameworks has impeded the comprehension of the interplay between these factors in the entrepreneurial trajectories of women. This issue is further compounded by methodological diversity, primarily consisting of qualitative and localised case studies, which limits the possibility of establishing systematic comparisons and identifying general trends (Stylianou et al., 2025).

In this context, there is a necessity to move towards knowledge integration processes that allow for the organisation and synthesis of existing findings (Batra & Batra, 2026; Chhabra et al., 2025). A systematic review constitutes a methodological approach that is well-suited to the identification of the primary determinants of women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. Furthermore, it facilitates the analysis of the challenges encountered by women entrepreneurs and the comprehension of the dynamics that influence the development of their initiatives. The systematisation of evidence has been demonstrated to contribute to the reduction of fragmentation within the field, thereby facilitating the consolidation of a structured knowledge base concerning women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector (Rodríguez-Vera et al., 2025). Moreover, the results obtained can provide evidence for the design of public policies, strategies to support women's entrepreneurship, and academic training programmes in tourism, entrepreneurship, and sustainable territorial development.

The systematization of the extant literature is instrumental in establishing a more robust knowledge base concerning the role of women in the development of the tourism sector. To

achieve this objective, a series of questions have been developed to guide the analysis of existing knowledge on female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector.

1. What are the main economic, social, and institutional determinants that influence female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector?
2. What are the structural, financial, and sociocultural challenges that women face in the creation and consolidation of tourism ventures?
3. What business development dynamics characterize tourism ventures led by women?
4. How has female entrepreneurship in tourism been addressed in recent scientific literature?
5. What knowledge gaps persist in research on women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector?

A systematic review of female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector is necessary due to its growing relevance in economic, social, and territorial development. Women-led businesses have been shown to contribute to the diversification of tourism offerings, job creation, and the revitalisation of local economies, especially in rural and emerging destinations. However, the extant literature is dispersed across a range of disciplinary approaches and geographical contexts, impeding a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. In this regard, a systematic review facilitates the organisation and synthesis of available knowledge, as well as the identification of the main determinants and challenges of women's entrepreneurship in tourism.

From a gender perspective, this review also facilitates the analysis of inequalities affecting women's participation in tourism business activities and the opportunities the sector offers for their economic and social empowerment. Moreover, the systematization of evidence provides a foundation for the design of public policies and strengthens academic research in the fields of tourism, entrepreneurship, and gender studies.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted using a systematic literature review (SLR) on women's entrepreneurship in tourism, following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021) to ensure rigor and transparency. The process involved the identification of relevant studies through database searches, the application of eligibility criteria, the selection of articles, and the extraction and analysis of information. The methodological flow is presented in Figure 1 using the PRISMA diagram.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The selection of studies included in the systematic review was based on predefined eligibility criteria to ensure the thematic relevance, scientific quality, and methodological coherence of the analysed literature, based on the conceptual delimitation of women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector.

Regarding the inclusion criteria, scientific articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals that addressed women's entrepreneurship in activities related to tourism, hospitality, travel, or leisure were considered. The study incorporated empirical research and theoretical reviews, analysing factors associated with female entrepreneurship, including determinants of entrepreneurship, structural or sociocultural challenges, and business development dynamics. To guarantee the scientific rigour of the study, it was necessary to restrict the consideration to documents which had been published in journals that were indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, and which were written in English or Spanish.

Subsequently, three exclusion phases were applied. The initial phase of the project involved the elimination of indexing errors and non-scientific documents, including duplicates, editorials, conference notes, and book reviews. The second of these steps confirmed the availability of the full text. The third stage of the assessment entailed the evaluation of the thematic relevance, which was conducted by means of a thorough review of the title, abstract, and keywords. This process involved the exclusion of studies that were deemed to be unrelated to tourism, lacked a gender perspective, or did not analyse female entrepreneurship within the tourism sector.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The identification of relevant studies was conducted through the utilisation of the Scopus and Web of Science databases, which have been selected based on their international recognition and extensive coverage of scientific literature. It is evident that both databases meticulously index high-quality academic journals and implement rigorous editorial criteria. This ensures the reliability of the analysed studies. The amalgamation of these databases facilitated a more extensive bibliographic coverage and reduced bias in the selection of relevant scientific literature (Asubiaro et al., 2024).

SEARCH STRATEGY

The search strategy was formulated using structured search equations to identify scientific literature on women's entrepreneurship in tourism. The equations were constructed with Boolean operators AND and OR, combining terms related to gender, tourism, and entrepreneurship (women entrepreneurship, female entrepreneurship, tourism, hospitality, women entrepreneurs). For each database, a specific equation was defined. In Scopus, the following search terms were utilised:

((TITLE (won OR female OR gender OR ladies OR girl) AND TITLE (touris* OR travel* OR hospitalit* OR leisure OR holiday OR vacation) AND TITLE (entrepernar*)) OR (AUTHKEY (wom?n OR female OR gender OR ladies OR girl) AND AUTHKEY (touris* OR travel* OR hospitalit* OR leisure OR holiday OR vacation) AND AUTHKEY (entrepreneur*))).

In Web of Science, it was used:

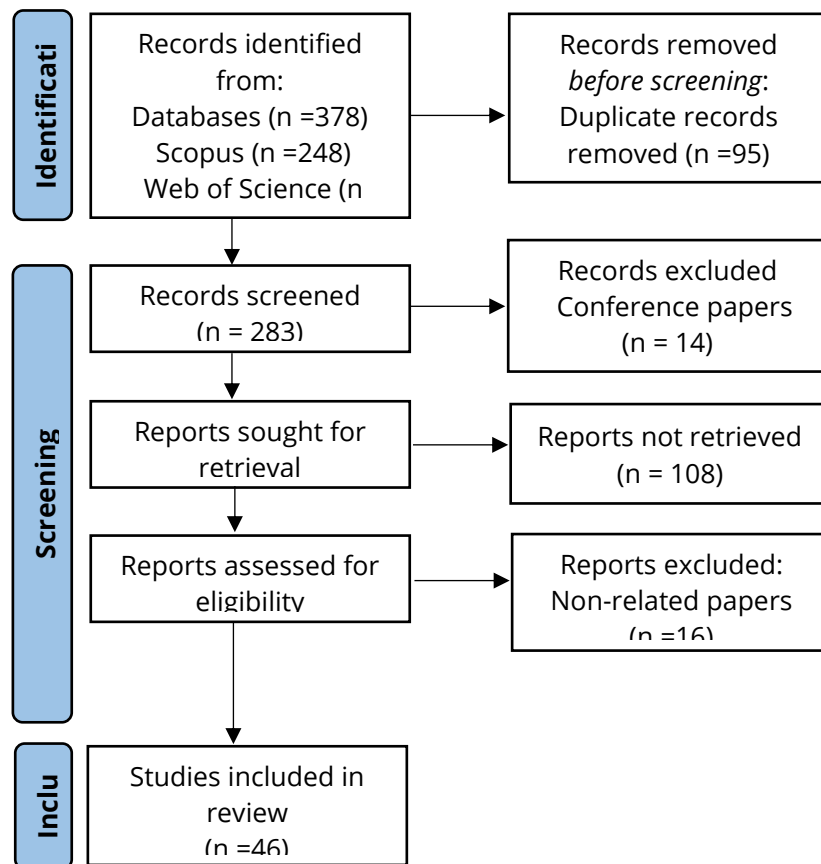
((TS= (wom?n OR female OR gender OR ladies OR girl) AND TS= (touris* OR travel* OR hospitalit* OR leisure OR holiday OR vacation) AND TS= (entrepreneur*)) OR (AK= (wom?n OR female OR gender OR ladies OR girl) AND AK= (touris* OR travel* OR hospitalit* OR leisure OR holiday OR vacation) AND AK= (entrepreneur*))).

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 methodology, thereby ensuring a systematic, transparent, and reproducible procedure. Initially, records were identified through search queries in the selected databases. Subsequently, the duplicates were eliminated. Subsequently, the title and abstract of each study were reviewed to assess its relevance, and relevant documents were analysed in full text according to the eligibility criteria. The final selection of included articles was made.

Figure 1 presents a flowchart outlining the process for identifying, screening, evaluating and selecting studies in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines.

Figure 1 - PRISMA flowchart



Source: Created by the author using data from Scopus and Web of Science

DATA PROCESSING

The data processing was conducted by means of the organisation and systematisation of the information extracted from the selected studies, with the employment of Microsoft Excel. An extraction matrix was developed to record the main elements of each article in a standardised manner. The variables analysed included authors, year of publication, country of study, methodological approach, type of venture, determinants of female entrepreneurship, challenges identified, and business development dynamics. This matrix enabled the systematisation of information and facilitated comparative analysis, thereby identifying patterns and trends in the literature on female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector.

RISK OF BIAS

The risk of bias was assessed by means of an analysis of the methodological quality of the included studies, with this analysis considering methodological coherence, clarity of objectives, consistency of results, and thematic relevance to female entrepreneurship in tourism. To ensure the reliability of the results, potential selection and interpretation biases were also controlled for during the identification and analysis of the studies. The potential biases arising from the utilisation of databases, search terms, and reporting bias were also acknowledged.

RESULTS

The results presented in this section are derived from a systematic analysis of selected studies identified in the literature review on female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. The findings have been organised according to the research questions, thus enabling a

structured examination of existing knowledge on the factors influencing this phenomenon. The analysis of the extant studies identified the determinants of female entrepreneurship, the structural and sociocultural challenges confronted by female entrepreneurs, the dynamics of business development, the research approaches adopted, and the knowledge gaps present in the scientific literature. The following subsections present a thematic synthesis of the reviewed studies, based on the elements. Table 1 presents a summary of the articles included and utilised in the detailed literature analysis.

Table 1 – Studies included in the research

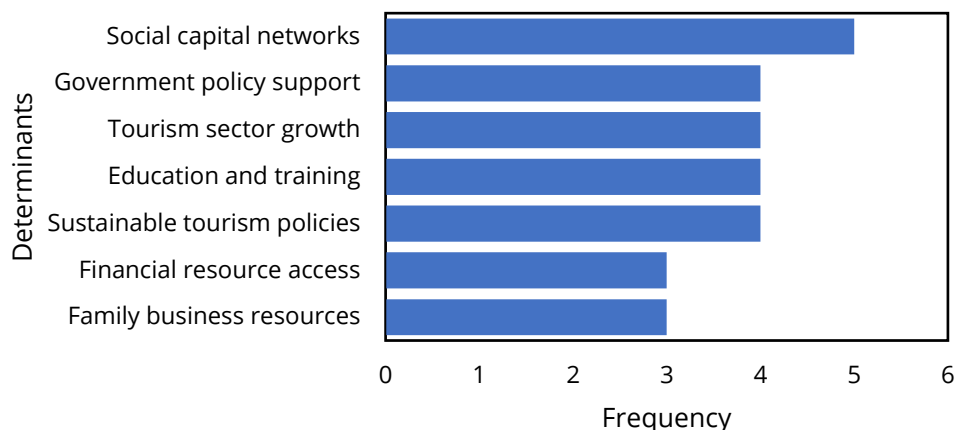
Title	Authors
Beyond Economic Earnings: The Holistic Meaning of Success for Women in Agritourism	Halim et al., (2020)
Effective Resources to Mobilize Women Entrepreneurship: A Success Case Study of Family Tourism Businesses in Tioman Island, Malaysia	Dan & Shimizu (2022)
Empowered Women in a Rural Community: A Case Study in Sarapiquí, Costa Rica	López-Estrada et al., (2023)
Empowering Women Homepreneurs in Tourism and Hospitality: Entrepreneurial Competencies and Learning Approach	Harb et al., (2025)
Entrepreneurship in Higher Education in Tourism, gender issue?	Muñoz-Fernández et al., (2016)
Flourishing Women through Sustainable Tourism Entrepreneurship	Ertac & Tanova (2020)
Fostering Green Entrepreneurship and Women's Empowerment through Education and Banks' Investments in Tourism: Evidence from Serbia	Radović-Marković & Živanović (2019)
Obstacles to Sustainable Entrepreneurship amongst Tourism Students: A Gender Comparison	Butkouskaya, Romagosa, & Noguera (2020)
Recognising the regenerative impacts of Canadian women tourism social entrepreneurs through a feminist ethic of care lens	Boluk & Panse (2022)
The female entrepreneur in rural tourism: Peculiarities of the costa rican case through the review of literature	Gutiérrez Cruz et al., (2020)
The Impact of COVID-19 on Tourism and Hospitality in Poland: Female Entrepreneurial Firms' Ecosystem Strategies	Zapalska & McCutcheon (2024)
Untangling Factors Influencing Women Entrepreneurs' Involvement in Tourism and Its Impact on Sustainable Tourism Development	Samad & Alharthi (2022)
We Can and Must Empower Women to Thrive Through Destination Crisis: A Study of Women's Entrepreneurial Resilience in the Tourism Sector	Sawangchai et al., (2025)
Women's Entrepreneurship in the Tourism Industry: A Bibliometric Study	Rodríguez-Vera et al., (2025)
A critical analysis of the networking experiences of female entrepreneurs: a study based on the small business tourism sector in Sri Lanka	Surangi (2022)
Actioning sustainability through tourism entrepreneurship: Women entrepreneurs as change agents navigating through the field of stakeholders	Karatas-Ozkan et al., (2024)
Creation of tourism entrepreneurship in Manabí (Ecuador) in the post COVID-19 era. Profiles, gender, motivations and limitations; [Creación de emprendimientos turísticos en Manabí (Ecuador) en la era post COVID-19. Perfiles, género, motivaciones y limitaciones]	García-Reinoso et al., (2025)
Does gender identity play a role in the development of tourism entrepreneurial capabilities?	Ezeuduji, Deen, & Nzama (2025)
Economic and financial analysis of entrepreneurship in tourism sector: a gender perspective	Lado-Sestayo & Vivel-Búa (2017)
Empowering women in rural montenegro: a pathway to sustainable rural tourism development	Rakočević, Knežević, & Vujko (2025)
Empowerment of rural women: an analysis of female entrepreneurs in rural tourism in the Toledo region, Parana, Brazil	Schmidt, Biesdorf, & Cielo (2025)
Entrepreneurial resources and the well-being of women entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry of Uganda	Najjinda et al., (2025)
Entrepreneurship as a job opportunity for women graduates in tourism; [el emprendimiento como oportunidad laboral para las mujeres graduadas en turismo]	López-Gómez (2023)

Entrepreneurship, Sport, Sustainability and Integration: A Business Model in the Low-Season Tourism Sector	Reier Forradellas et al., (2021)
Female Entrepreneurship in Small Tourism and Hospitality Firms in Poland	Zapalska & McCutcheon (2024)
Female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector: a bibliometric analysis; [El emprendimiento femenino en el sector turístico: un análisis bibliométrico]	Rodríguez-Vera et al., (2024)
Female entrepreneurship in tourism: mapping the scientific production; [empreendedorismo feminino no turismo: mapeamento da produção científica]	Zukunelli, Padilha, & Binotto (2025)
Forging an entrepreneur – gendered ideas and ideals	Roos & Pettersson (2024)
Gender Differences in the Evolution of Haute Cuisine Chef’s Career	Albors Garrigós et al., (2020)
Job Satisfaction and Gender in Rural Tourist Accommodations in the Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche, Andalusia, Spain	Trillo Rodríguez et al., (2025)
Marine tourism as an option for sustainable local development based on female empowerment	Caamaño Franco et al., (2020)
No (wo)man is an island–sociocultural context and women’s empowerment in Samoa	Persson, Zampoukos, & Ljunggren (2022)
Peripheral tourism entrepreneurs in a resource-constrained environment: evidence from eastern cape province, south africa	Sixaba & Rogerson (2023)
Promoting female entrepreneurship in tourism for sustainable development	Tovmasyan (2022)
Rural women and ecotourism: modeling entrepreneurial behavior in Iran	Aghdasi et al., (2023)
Satisfacción laboral y género en los alojamientos turísticos rurales de la Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche, Andalucía, España *	Trillo Rodríguez et al., (2025)
Territorial intensive products as promoters of regional tourism. The case study of douro skincare	Carvalho et al., (2018)
The challenges to women’s entrepreneurial involvement in the hospitality industry	Khalid et al., (2022)
The development of youth and woman entrepreneurship program in village tourism through partnership	Untari & Suharto (2021)
The Motivations of Women Entrepreneurs in the Tourism Industry	Avci & Gümüş (2022)
The role of emotional intelligence in shaping entrepreneurial intentions among Tunisian women in sustainable tourism	Bardaa (2025)
Tourism development, entrepreneurship and women’s empowerment - Focus on Serbian countryside	Vukovic et al., (2023)
Turismo rural, empreendedorismo e gênero: Um estudo de caso na comunidade autônoma da galiza	Dieguez-Castrillón et al., (2012)
Women and Symbolic Violence: Measurement Scale of Gender in Tourism Sustainability and the Case of Ecuador	Landeta-Bejarano et al., (2025)
Women Entrepreneurs’ Role in Tourism Co-Creation and Policy: Examining the Case of Cyprus	Stylianou, Liasidou, & Garanti (2025)
Women’s Entrepreneurship in rural areas: tourism as a development engine	Talón Ballesterio et al., (2014)

Source: Prepared by the author using data from Scopus and Web of Science

As illustrated in Figure 2, the distribution of the primary economic and institutional determinants identified in extant literature on female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector is demonstrated. The most prevalent category is social capital networks, which are mentioned in five of the reviewed studies. After this, government policy support, tourism sector growth, education and training, and sustainable tourism policies are to be found, each with four entries. It was established that financial resource access and family business resources were each mentioned on three occasions.

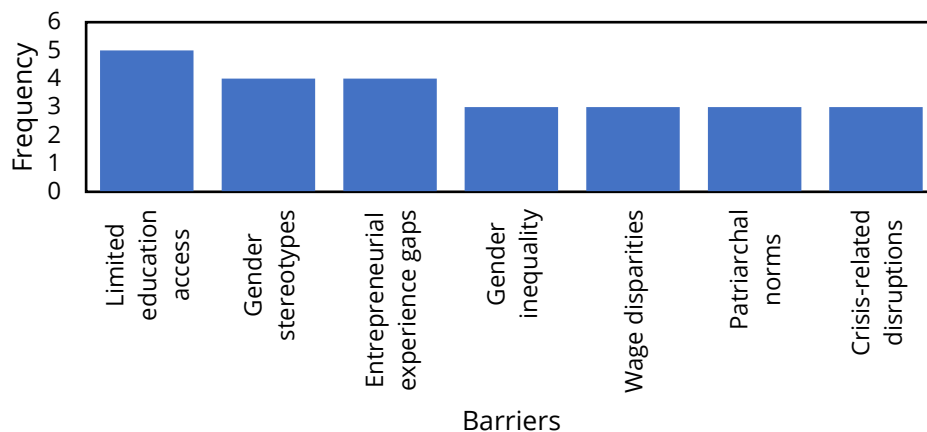
Figure 2 – Frequency of economic and institutional determinants of female entrepreneurship in tourism



Source: Prepared by the author using data from Scopus and Web of Science

As illustrated in Figure 3, the distribution of the primary financial and sociocultural barriers identified in the extant literature on women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector is demonstrated. The most prevalent category is that of limited educational access, which is mentioned in five of the reviewed studies. Subsequently, gender stereotypes and entrepreneurial experience gaps are identified, with each of these themes receiving four mentions. The identified issues included gender inequality, wage disparities, patriarchal norms, and crisis-related disruptions, each of which received three mentions. The results of the study presented herein reveal the most recurrent barriers reported in the extant literature on the financial and sociocultural limitations associated with women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector.

Figure 3 – Frequency of financial and sociocultural barriers to female entrepreneurship in tourism

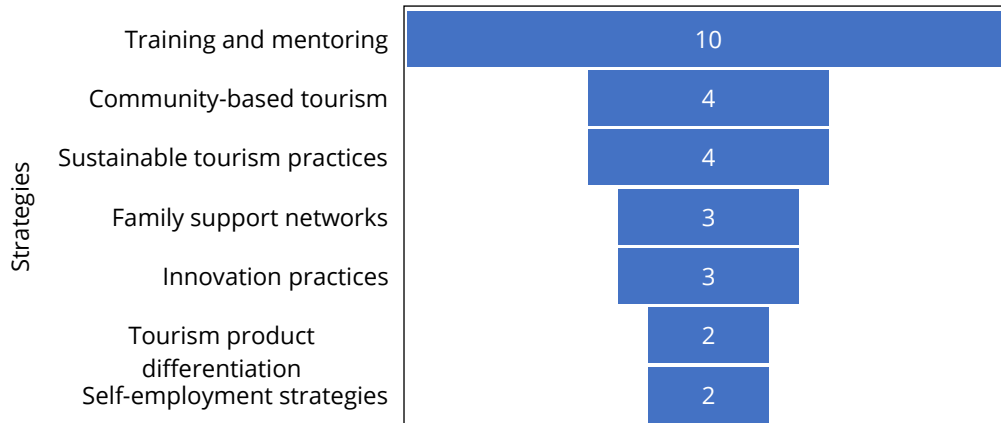


Source: Prepared by the author using data from Scopus and Web of Science

As illustrated in Figure 4, the distribution of the predominant business development strategies documented in the extant literature on women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector is demonstrated. The most prevalent category is training and mentoring, which is mentioned in ten studies. Community-based tourism and sustainable tourism practices are mentioned second and fourth, respectively. It was also noted that family support networks and innovation practices were each mentioned on three occasions. Finally, the text contains two entries on tourism product differentiation and self-employment strategies. The

amalgamation of these categories thus provides a comprehensive overview of the most prevalent strategies that have been identified in the analysed studies.

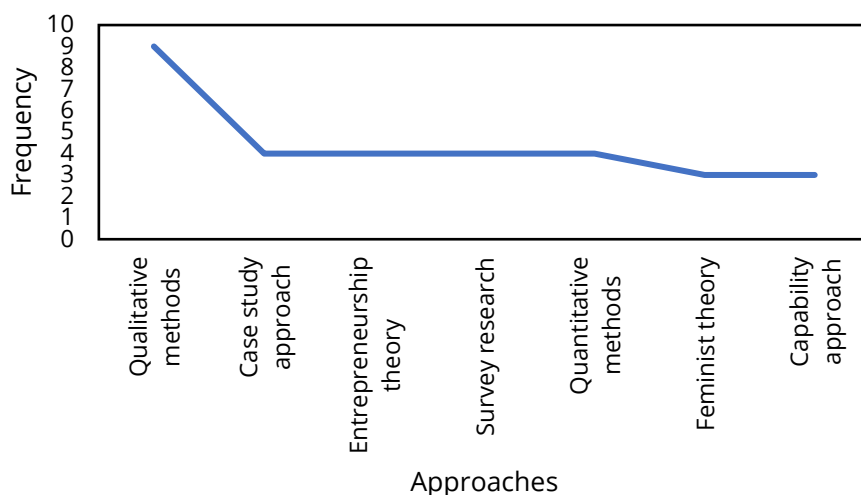
Figure 4 – Business development strategies in women's tourism



Source: Prepared by the author using data from Scopus and Web of Science

As illustrated in Figure 5, the extant literature on women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector employs a range of theoretical and methodological approaches. The most frequently cited approach is qualitative methods, with nine mentions in the reviewed studies. The subsequent approach is that of a case study, with entrepreneurship theory, survey research and quantitative methods each being mentioned on four occasions. The analysis further identifies the concepts of feminist theory and the capability approach, with each of these being mentioned on three occasions. When considered as a whole, these results provide a comprehensive overview of the predominant approaches used to analyse women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector.

Figure 5 – Theoretical and methodological approaches in female tourism entrepreneurship

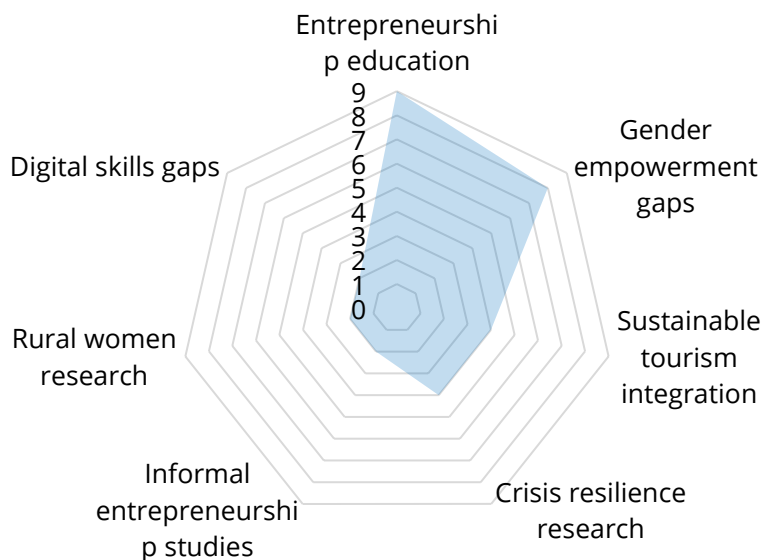


Source: Prepared by the author using data from Scopus and Web of Science

As illustrated in Figure 6, the distribution of the primary research gaps and future agenda items identified in the extant literature on women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector is demonstrated. The category with the highest frequency of mentions in the reviewed studies is entrepreneurship education, which is mentioned in nine cases. The issue of gender

empowerment gaps is mentioned in eight instances, ranking second in terms of frequency. The integration of sustainable tourism and the development of crisis resilience have each been identified as areas of research with four mentions. Finally, informal entrepreneurship studies, research on rural women, and the issue of digital skills gaps are each mentioned on two occasions. When considered collectively, these categories encapsulate the primary themes that have been identified as priorities for future research endeavours.

Figure 6 – Gaps and future agendas of female tourism entrepreneurship



Source: Prepared by the author using data from Scopus and Web of Science

The results were organised according to the research questions and allowed for the structuring of the evidence identified in the literature on women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. Firstly, the economic and institutional determinants associated with the creation and consolidation of women-led business initiatives were systematised. Secondly, the primary financial and sociocultural barriers that condition their development were identified. In the following section, the strategies employed to strengthen business growth will be described. The predominant theoretical and methodological approaches in the reviewed studies were also examined. Consequently, research gaps and future research directions with the objective of expanding knowledge in this field were identified.

DISCUSSION

The discussion is structured in accordance with the study objectives and research questions, with a view to interpreting the results obtained in the systematic review on women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. Firstly, the primary findings pertaining to the determinants, barriers, and business development strategies that have been identified in the extant literature are examined. Subsequently, the results are compared with those of previous studies to identify both convergences and divergences in the field of research. It is posited that, in consideration of the evidence that has been analysed, a conceptual framework may be proposed for integration of the factors relevant to the phenomenon under study. The theoretical, political and practical implications of the study are presented, as well as the limitations of the research and directions for future research.

RESULTS ANALYSIS

Firstly, the results indicate that female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector is influenced by relational and institutional factors that structure the environment of business opportunities. The presence of social networks and relational capital has been demonstrated to facilitate cooperation, trust-building, and access to strategic connections that enable the mobilisation of resources and promote women's participation in tourism activities. Conversely, the influence of the institutional context on business development is reinforced by public policy support, training programmes and the growth of the tourism sector (Dan & Shimizu, 2022; Savage et al., 2023).

Conversely, extant literature indicates that female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector is impeded by structural barriers, including educational restrictions, gender stereotypes, and disparities in entrepreneurial experience. These limitations have the effect of reducing women's access to the knowledge, skills and opportunities necessary to create and consolidate tourism initiatives. Moreover, sociocultural factors, including gender inequality, patriarchal norms, and wage disparities, persist in influencing their economic participation. Furthermore, external crises have been shown to intensify these constraints by affecting the stability of businesses (López-Estrada et al., 2023; Muñoz-Fernández et al., 2016).

Moreover, the development of women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector is contingent on strategies that emphasise capacity building, experiential learning, and business support. The implementation of training and mentoring programs has been identified as a key strategy to facilitate the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills, with the aim of creating and consolidating women-led initiatives. Conversely, approaches founded upon community-based tourism, sustainability, family networks, and innovation have been demonstrated to enhance the viability of such enterprises (Harb et al., 2025; Radović-Marković & Živanović, 2019).

From a methodological perspective, qualitative approaches predominate in the analysis of women's entrepreneurship in tourism, reflecting an interest in understanding the experiences, meanings, and social dynamics that influence women's participation in this sector. However, case studies, surveys and quantitative methods are also identified, as well as the use of theoretical frameworks such as feminist theory and the capabilities approach to analyse processes of inequality, agency and empowerment (Boluk & Panse, 2022; Sixaba & Rogerson, 2023).

The future research agenda is oriented towards the enhancement of entrepreneurial education and the analysis of women's empowerment processes within the tourism sector. The extant literature also highlights the need to link women's entrepreneurship with sustainability approaches and to examine resilience to crises affecting tourism. Furthermore, there is a paucity of research in the study of informal entrepreneurship, women's entrepreneurship in rural contexts, and the development of digital skills (Cruz et al., 2020; Zapalska & McCutcheon, 2024).

COMPARISON OF RESULTS WITH OTHER STUDIES

The evidence identified in this study aligns with research analysing entrepreneurship from a systemic perspective, integrating institutional, social, and individual factors. In a manner consistent with the review on entrepreneurship among returning migrants, the results indicate that entrepreneurial processes are contingent on the interaction between structural conditions, social networks, and environmental opportunities (Silva et al., 2026). However, while Silva et al. (2026) focus on the relationship between migration, return migration and

entrepreneurship, this study emphasises the gender dimension and the conditions faced by women in the tourism sector.

Moreover, the results of the present study are in alignment with those of previous research on the adoption of technology and the evolution of SMEs in emerging contexts. Chong et al. posit that the development of entrepreneurship is contingent on the interplay between facilitators, barriers, and institutional conditions. This structural observation is corroborated in this study during the identification of determinants, barriers, and strategies for female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. Nevertheless, while Chong et al. prioritise technological adoption in Southeast Asia, this analysis incorporates a gender perspective and considers sociocultural and territorial factors.

The results of the study align with existing research on female entrepreneurship in vulnerable contexts. Hasan et al. demonstrate that women in emerging economies face social stigma, financial limitations, and gaps in entrepreneurial skills. These findings are consistent with the results of this study, which identifies financial and sociocultural barriers in women-led tourism ventures. However, Hasan et al. specifically analyse women with disabilities in Bangladesh.

Moreover, the findings are pertinent to research conducted on business resilience in the tourism sector. They emphasise the significance of family resources, intergenerational cooperation, and collective learning in enhancing business adaptation. These aspects are also identified in this study through family support and social networks.

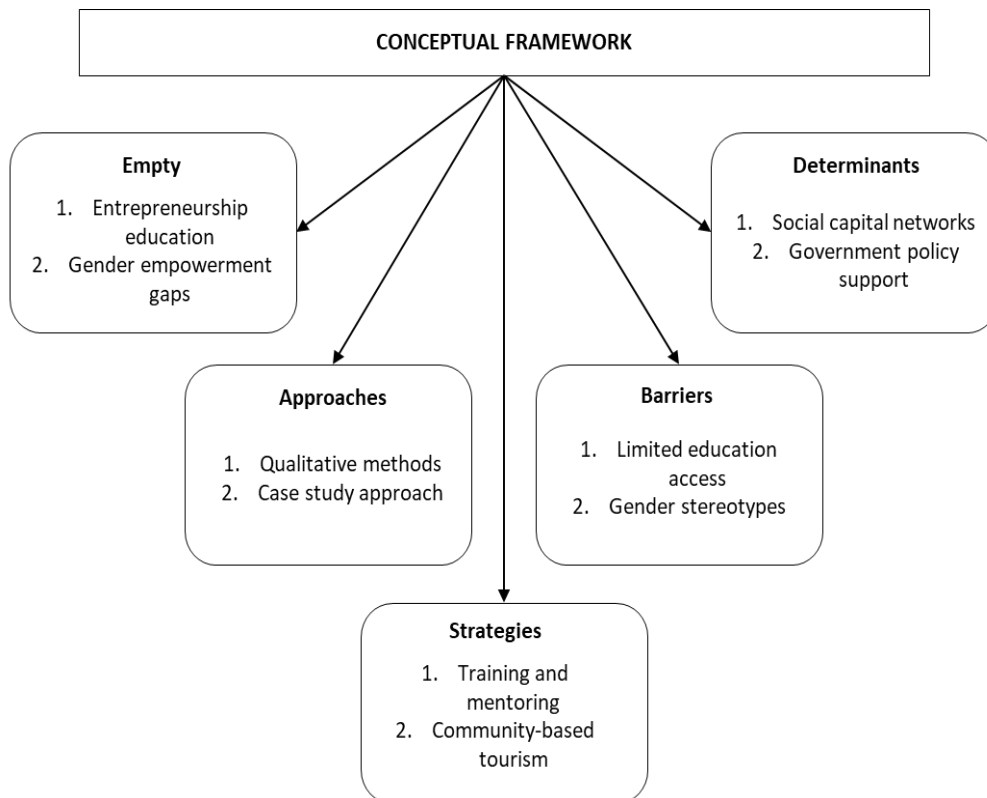
With regard to the development strategies employed, the results obtained are in alignment with the extant research that emphasises the pivotal role of mentorship, training, and support programmes. (Veiga et al., 2026) highlight a notable lacuna in many mentoring programs, which fail to consider the sociocultural conditions of women in emerging economies. This oversight underscores the imperative to devise support strategies that are informed by a gender perspective and consider the nuances of territorial contexts.

This study makes a significant contribution to the extant literature on women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. It integrates five distinct dimensions of this phenomenon, namely its determinants, barriers, strategies, theoretical approaches, and research gaps. This perspective facilitates the identification of common patterns and can guide future academic agendas, especially in comparative studies, interdisciplinary approaches, and the integration of gender, territorial development, and sustainability.

PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As illustrated in Figure 7, the conceptual framework has been derived from the results of the systematic review on women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. The model integrates the main components identified in the extant literature and organises them into four interrelated dimensions: economic and institutional determinants, financial and sociocultural barriers, business development strategies, and theoretical and methodological approaches. These dimensions facilitate comprehension of the relationship between structural conditions, contextual factors, and strategic actions that influence the creation and consolidation of women-led business initiatives. Moreover, the model incorporates identified research gaps, which will guide future lines of study in this field.

Figure 7 – *Conceptual framework of female entrepreneurship in tourism*



Source: Author's own elaboration

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this systematic review make significant contributions to the fields of entrepreneurship theory, gender studies, and tourism, by integrating diverse dimensions that facilitate an understanding of the dynamics of female entrepreneurship in tourism contexts. From an entrepreneurship theory perspective, the study demonstrates that the establishment and development of women-led businesses is contingent not only on individual factors but also on the interaction between structural conditions, social resources, institutional opportunities, and business strategies. This systemic approach facilitates comprehension of female entrepreneurship as a process influenced by social networks, access to financing, public policies, and the dynamics of the tourism market.

The results of the gender studies indicate that the entrepreneurial trajectories of women are influenced by persistent sociocultural barriers, including gender stereotypes, educational inequalities, and limitations in access to financial and social capital. These restrictions have consequences for entrepreneurship, both in terms of access and the possibilities for business growth, innovation, and sustainability. This highlights the need for gender perspectives to be incorporated into the analysis of tourism entrepreneurship.

Research in the field of tourism has demonstrated that women's entrepreneurship can function as a catalyst for territorial development. A significant number of women-led initiatives are associated with community-based tourism, sustainable practices, and local development strategies that are focused on job creation, economic diversification, and the strengthening of social capital.

In terms of the public policy implications, the results underscore the necessity to fortify support systems for women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. This encompasses

training programmes that integrate business skills, digital skills, and innovation, as well as inclusive financial instruments that facilitate women's access to credit, seed capital, and investment mechanisms. The importance of promoting more inclusive tourism governance models that integrate the participation of women entrepreneurs in decision-making processes is also emphasised.

From a pragmatic standpoint, the findings indicate the necessity for the enhancement of training, mentoring, and business support programmes, in addition to the promotion of collaborative networks among women entrepreneurs. These actions can facilitate knowledge sharing, the creation of alliances, and access to new market opportunities. The results of the study demonstrate the necessity of adopting comprehensive approaches that integrate public policies, support institutions, local communities, and entrepreneurs to promote more equitable environments and empower women as agents of economic, social, and territorial development in tourism.

LIMITATIONS

The study is subject to methodological and empirical limitations inherent to systematic literature reviews. Firstly, the analysis was based on articles indexed in specific academic databases. This means that research published in other sources, such as books, institutional reports, or grey literature, may have been excluded from the analysed corpus. This restriction has the effect of reducing the scope of the reviewed overview, and may consequently result in a partial representation of the extant knowledge on women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. Secondly, there is the possibility of publication bias, since scientific databases tend to concentrate studies with positive results or greater academic visibility, while research with inconclusive results or less widespread dissemination may be underrepresented. Furthermore, the geographical distribution of the analysed studies shows a concentration in certain regions, which limits the generalizability of the results to other territorial or cultural contexts where women's entrepreneurship in tourism may present different characteristics. Another limitation pertains to the conceptual scope of the study. The analysis was structured around analytical categories derived from the reviewed studies, so it is possible that some theoretical approaches or dimensions of the phenomenon may not have been explicitly considered. In conclusion, the categorisation process entailed an interpretive synthesis of the information available in the literature. This can serve to simplify complex phenomena by grouping them into general analytical categories. These limitations indicate the advisability of expanding future reviews by using more diverse sources, comparative approaches, and complementary empirical analyses.

LINES OF FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of the systematic review identify several avenues for future research aimed at deepening our understanding of female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. Firstly, the necessity for longitudinal studies examining the evolution of women-led businesses over time is evident. A significant proportion of the reviewed literature employs cross-sectional designs that analyse situations at specific points in time, thereby limiting comprehension of the processes of growth, adaptation, and business sustainability. Longitudinal studies would facilitate analysis of how female entrepreneurs respond to transformations in the economic, social, and tourism environment, as well as evaluation of the effect of factors such as training, access to financing, and support networks on business performance. Secondly, it is evident that there is a necessity to broaden the scope of regional comparative analyses. Scientific production exhibits an uneven geographical distribution, characterised by a preponderance of studies in specific contexts and a relative paucity of research from other territories.

A comparative study between countries or regions would facilitate the identification of both the differences and the similarities in the factors that influence female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. Such a study would consider institutional, cultural and economic variables. This approach would foster the development of more robust analytical frameworks and facilitate understanding of the role of territorial context in the opportunities and constraints faced by women entrepreneurs. Another pertinent research trajectory pertains to the examination of female entrepreneurship within rural contexts and in the Global South. Even though certain studies have been conducted which address these realities, the available evidence remains limited. Women entrepreneurs in rural areas or developing economies face challenges associated with less access to infrastructure, financing, and institutional support networks. In such contexts, tourism can serve as an alternative to diversify the local economy, generate income, and strengthen territorial development processes. Empirical studies are required to examine the characteristics of women-led enterprises in rural or peripheral communities, as well as the factors that promote their economic and social sustainability. Furthermore, there is a necessity to extend the scope of research on public policies pertaining to female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. The extant literature indicates that training programmes, financial instruments and business development policies influence women's opportunities to start and consolidate tourism businesses. Nevertheless, the extant literature on the effectiveness of these policies and their impact on reducing gender gaps remains limited. It is recommended that future research focus on the analysis of the way tourism, entrepreneurship and rural development policies contribute to the strengthening of inclusive business ecosystems and the improvement of women's economic participation.

It is evident that further empirical studies are required about women-led business strategies in the tourism sector. Despite the existence of literature identifying various strategies related to training, innovation, social networks, and community-based tourism, there is still a paucity of evidence on their implementation in different contexts and their influence on business performance. It is recommended that future research focus on the following areas: the role of social innovation; the adoption of digital technologies; the diversification of tourism products; and the creation of cooperative networks among women entrepreneurs. When considered as a whole, these strands of research contribute to the expansion of knowledge about women's entrepreneurship in tourism and strengthen the empirical base necessary for designing public policies and business development strategies that promote women's economic participation in this sector.

CONCLUSIONS

The study's findings enable us to interpret female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector as a process shaped by the interaction between institutional structures, social dynamics, and entrepreneurial capabilities. The results of the systematic review indicate that the establishment and consolidation of women-led initiatives is not solely explained by individual attributes, but rather by the relationship between the economic environment, social networks, and governance frameworks that condition entrepreneurial opportunities. This approach lends further credence to the utility of systemic perspectives in analysing the influence of territorial contexts and institutional conditions on the entrepreneurial trajectories of women. The evidence analysed also demonstrates a correlation between female entrepreneurship in the tourism sector and local development processes, community participation, and the valorisation of cultural and natural resources.

The findings of this study indicate that women-led business initiatives contribute to the development of inclusive and sustainable tourism models, particularly in territories where tourism activity is integrated with local economies and community structures. From an academic perspective, the study contributes to the consolidation of an interdisciplinary field of research that articulates entrepreneurship theory, gender studies, and tourism analysis. The integration of diverse analytical dimensions facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that promote or restrict women's economic participation in this sector. The findings emphasise the necessity to fortify institutional frameworks that are designed to promote gender equality, facilitate access to productive resources, and generate entrepreneurial opportunities. It is imperative that there is coordination among public policies, support institutions, local communities and cooperation networks in order to consolidate inclusive tourism ecosystems. Such coordination is vital for recognising the role of women in economic and territorial development.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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ETHICS STATEMENT

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