

Women's labour participation in the tourism industry: a systematic literature review

Alejandro Valencia-Arias ¹ , Martha Luz Benjumea-Arias ² , Paula Andrea Rodríguez-Correa ² , Juan Camilo Rua Hernandez ³ , Karla Cristina Bonilla Restrepo ⁴ , Lucia Palacios Moya ⁵ 

¹ University of Los Lagos, Colombia

² Metropolitan Technological Institute, Colombia

³ Marco Fidel Suárez University Institution, Colombia

⁴ Catholic University Foundation of the North, 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 issue of women's participation in the tourism industry is a pertinent one in academic research, given its correlation with economic development, social inclusion, and job creation. Tourism is recognised as a dynamic sector of contemporary economies and a significant area for examining women's labour force participation in the service sector. However, the extant literature presents fragmented approaches that hinder an integrated understanding of the phenomenon. In this context, the present study aims to identify the main trends, factors, and barriers associated with women's labour force participation in the tourism industry through a systematic review of the scientific literature. The analysis has been developed in accordance with the guidelines set out in the 2020 PRISMA statement, a document which facilitates the transparent identification, selection, and evaluation of academic studies. The present study employs an approach that examines the intricacies of the dynamics that shape women's participation in the labour force within the tourism sector. This approach acknowledges the interaction between structural conditions of the labour market, organisational dynamics, and sociocultural factors that influence women's career paths.

Keywords: Female labour force participation, Tourism industry, Gender inequality, Tourism labour market, Systematic review.

INTRODUCTION

The participation of women in the tourism industry has been a subject of increasing attention in academic research due to its connection with economic development, social inclusion, and job creation. Tourism has firmly established itself as one of the most dynamic economic sectors on a global scale. It is characterised by its capacity to boost local economies, facilitate cultural exchange, and generate employment opportunities in a variety of geographical contexts. As a constituent of the service sector, it boasts a notable female presence in domains such as hospitality, gastronomy, customer service, tourism intermediation, and the administration of leisure and entertainment services (Wang & Cheung, 2024; Yudhistira & Robaka, 2025).

The participation of women in these activities has been demonstrated to contribute to the growth of the tourism sector. Furthermore, it has been linked to processes promoting gender equality and expanding economic opportunities for women. In developing regions

and emerging tourist destinations, tourism has been identified as a significant source of employment for women, facilitating their access to income, promoting entrepreneurship, and enhancing the socioeconomic conditions of their families and communities. Moreover, the tourism industry provides opportunities for involvement at diverse levels of the value chain, ranging from operational roles to management and leadership positions (Kareem et al., 2025).

In this context, tourism emerges as a pertinent domain for the analysis of female participation in the labour market and the factors that influence women's inclusion in expanding economic sectors. The extant literature about female labour force participation indicates that variables such as educational level, household conditions, and sociocultural norms significantly influence women's labour market integration, especially in developing countries, where this participation is recognised as a key element for economic growth and reducing inequalities (Azidzul & Kassim, 2025).

Despite the growing academic interest in the topic, the literature is fragmented, hindering an integrated understanding of the phenomenon (Nursyamsiah et al., 2025). A plethora of studies have been conducted from various disciplinary perspectives, addressing the role of women in tourism through approaches related to employment in the service sector, tourism entrepreneurship, local development, and gender equality (Swart et al., 2024). However, these approaches frequently analyse specific dimensions in isolation, thereby limiting a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics that structure women's labour force participation in the tourism industry.

Research has been conducted on the role of tourism in economic and territorial development, with a particular focus on its capacity to generate employment in rural contexts and emerging destinations. The study noted that the participation of women is associated with the diversification of family income and the strengthening of local economies in these contexts (Rahman et al., 2024). It has been established that other scholars have previously examined gender inequalities in the tourism labour market. These scholars were able to identify phenomena such as occupational segregation, the concentration of women in operational or lower-paying positions, and limited opportunities for access to leadership roles. A body of research has been conducted about gender studies, with particular emphasis on the working conditions of women in the sector. The analysis has revealed various issues, including job insecurity, wage disparities, and challenges in achieving a healthy work-life balance (Wang et al., 2025). In addition, certain studies have focused on female tourism entrepreneurship, particularly in small businesses or community projects, although these studies often pertain to specific cases or contexts (Swart et al., 2024).

In this scenario, the necessity to organise and synthesise existing knowledge to identify research trends, factors and barriers associated with women's labour force participation in the tourism industry is evident. The objective of this research is to identify these trends, factors, and barriers through a systematic review of the scientific literature.

To achieve this objective, the systematic review process is guided by a series of questions, thus allowing for the organisation of the study's results. In this regard, the following research questions have been formulated: (i) What are the main research trends on women's labour force participation in the tourism industry?; (ii) What factors influence women's labour force participation in the tourism sector?; (iii) What are the main barriers women face in accessing or remaining in jobs within the tourism industry?; (iv) In which tourism sectors or activities is women's labour force participation concentrated?; (v) In which countries or regions has women's labour force participation in the tourism industry been most frequently studied?

The present study makes a significant contribution to the extant literature on women's labour force participation in the tourism industry, by means of a systematic review of the existing knowledge in this field. A comprehensive analysis of the scientific output was conducted, encompassing a thorough examination of research trends, explanatory factors, and knowledge gaps that impede a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Moreover, the results of the study provide a valuable foundation for future research and offer insights that can inform the development of public policies designed to promote gender equality and enhance women's employment prospects in the tourism sector.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted through a systematic literature review to identify, organise, and analyse the scientific output on women's labour force participation in the tourism industry. To ensure methodological rigor, transparency, and reproducibility, the guidelines of the 2020 PRISMA statement (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), which establishes guidelines for planning and reporting systematic reviews (Page et al., 2021), were followed. The process was structured in four stages: the identification of records in academic databases, the screening of titles and abstracts, the eligibility assessment through full-text reading, and the final inclusion of studies relevant to the analysis.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The eligibility criteria were defined with the objective of ensuring the thematic relevance, academic quality, and coherence of the analysed studies. The selection of articles was constrained to those published in indexed and peer-reviewed academic journals, a stipulation that is predicated on the premise that such publications ensure the establishment of recognised standards of quality and methodological rigour. Research published in English and Spanish was also considered, given the fact that these languages account for a significant proportion of international scientific output in the fields of tourism and gender studies. No preliminary constraints were imposed on the publication period with the objective of identifying the evolution of knowledge regarding women's labour force participation in the tourism industry. Thematically, studies were included that explicitly addressed women's participation in work activities related to tourism, tourism services, hospitality, travel, or recreational activities.

The exclusion process was conducted in three phases. Initially, the process entailed the removal of duplicate records and the rectification of potential indexing errors in the databases. Secondly, studies for which full-text access was unavailable were excluded from the analysis, as it was deemed necessary to evaluate their content and methodology. A comprehensive review of the articles was finally undertaken, with those articles which did not have a direct relationship with women's labour force participation in the tourism industry, or which focused on other economic sectors or dimensions of tourism unrelated to employment being discarded.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The information sources in question were the Scopus and Web of Science databases, which were selected based on their broad multidisciplinary coverage, rigorous indexing processes, and recognition in disseminating high-quality scientific literature. Both systems permit access to publications that have undergone the peer-review process, the identification of relevant studies, and the analysis of academic impact using citation metrics. The integration of these two approaches enables the identification of research on tourism, gender, and the labour market, thereby ensuring the reliability of systematic reviews (Asubiaro et al., 2024).

SEARCH STRATEGY

The search strategy was devised using specific equations for each database to systematically retrieve studies on women's labour force participation in the tourism industry. The construction of these equations was informed by three analytical dimensions: gender, tourism activity, and employment. These dimensions were then combined through the utilisation of Boolean operators (AND, OR).

In the Scopus database, the search was applied to the title and keyword fields using the following equation:

((TITLE (wom?n OR female OR gender OR ladies OR girl) AND TITLE (touris* OR travel* OR hospitalit* OR leisure OR holiday OR vacation) AND TITLE (labor OR employ* OR job OR profession)) 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 (labour OR employ* OR job OR profession))).

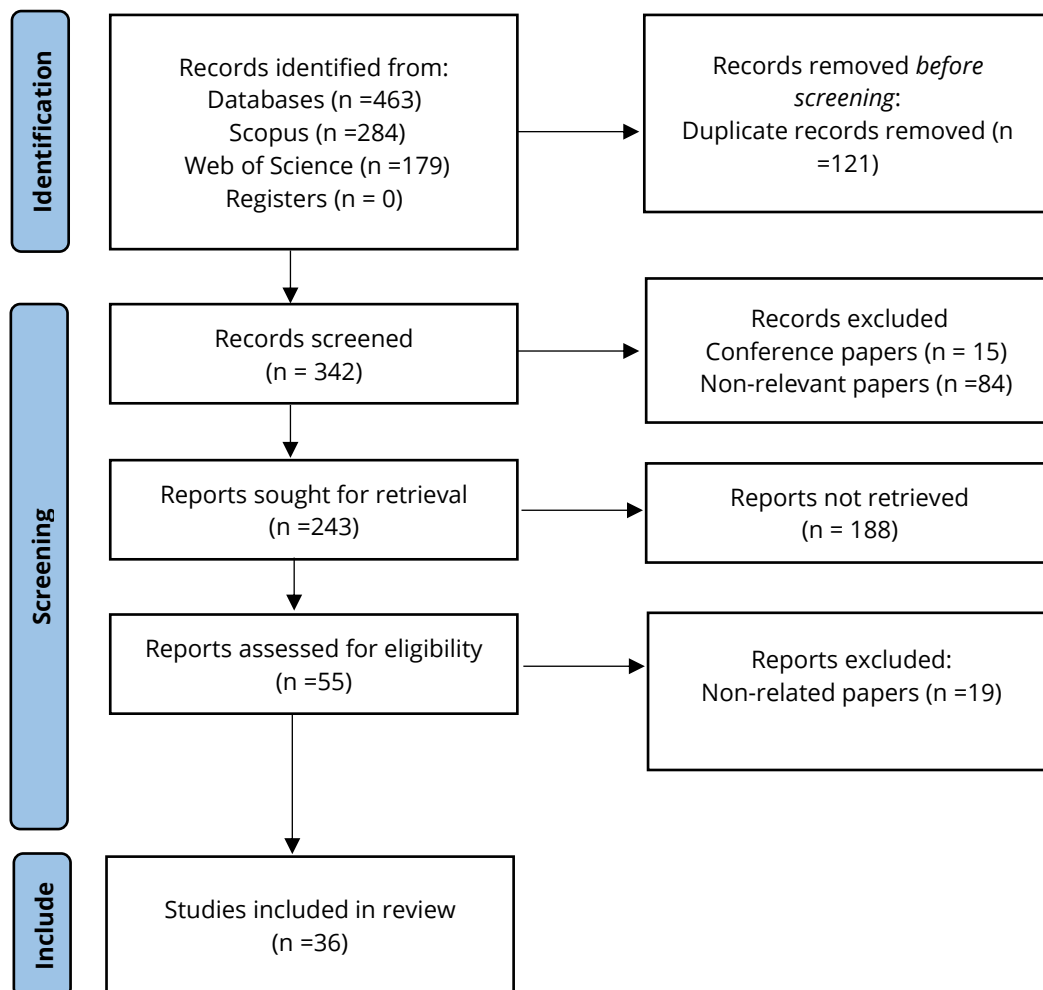
In Web of Science, an equivalent equation adapted to its syntax was used, employing the fields TS= for thematic search and AK= for author keywords. This approach ensured the maintenance of conceptual consistency and facilitated the retrieval of studies that met the inclusion criteria established for the systematic review.

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process for the study involved a progressive screening of records identified in the databases. Initially, the titles of the documents were reviewed with the objective of excluding those that were not related to the participation of women in the tourism industry. The subsequent stage of the process involved the evaluation of the abstracts of potentially relevant studies. Following this, the selected texts were read in full in order to verify their conceptual, methodological, and thematic relevance.

Figure 1 presents the flowchart of the selection process, developed according to the 2020 PRISMA statement. This flowchart illustrates the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of the articles analysed in the systematic review.

Figure 1 - PRISMA flowchart



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

DATA PROCESSING

The data processing was conducted through a systematic procedure of information extraction and organisation from the articles included in the review. Microsoft Excel was utilised as a data recording and management tool, facilitating the establishment of a database comprising the variables pertinent to the analysis. The matrix recorded the following information for each study: the authors, the year of publication, the country of study, the methodological approach, the main findings, and the analytical categories identified in each study. This procedure facilitated the comparative organisation of the studies, the identification of patterns in the literature, and the thematic classification of the results, enabling a systematic and structured analysis of the scientific evidence related to women's labour force participation in the tourism industry.

RISK OF BIAS

The risk of bias in study selection was assessed by applying eligibility criteria and a structured systematic review procedure. This approach has been shown to reduce distortions associated with the inclusion of irrelevant studies or those with limited methodological quality. However, the potential presence of biases arising from the use of specific databases, the selection of terms employed in the search strategy, and reporting biases present in the published scientific literature is acknowledged. In order to ensure transparency in the selection process, Figure 1 presents the PRISMA flow diagram, which describes the process

of identifying, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of the studies considered in the systematic review.

RESULTS

The results of the systematic review are presented according to the research questions posed, to structure the analysis of the literature on women's labour force participation in the tourism industry. The analysis is structured around the following research trends: firstly, the factors influencing women's labour force participation; secondly, the barriers to accessing and remaining in employment; thirdly, the tourism sectors with the highest female representation; and finally, the geographical distribution of the analysed studies. Table 1, which provides a synopsis of the selected studies and the information utilised in the detailed analysis of the scientific literature, is also included.

Table 1 – Studies included in the research

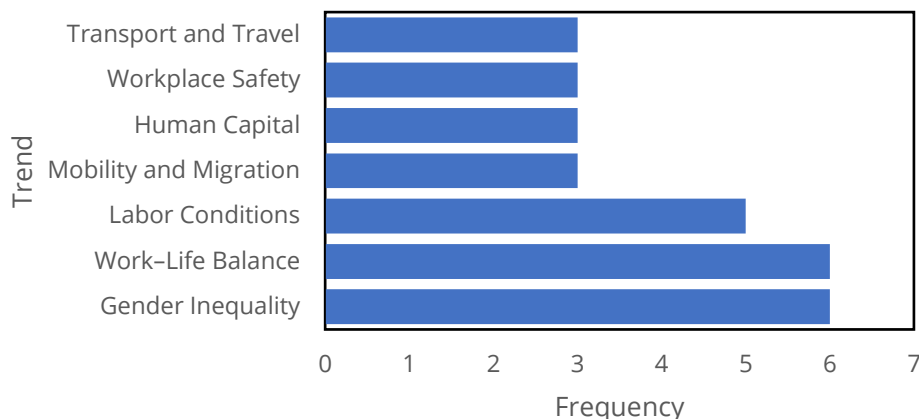
Title	Authors
¿Can Remittance Promote Tourism Income and Inclusive Gender Employment? Function of Migration in the South African Economy	Makwembere et al., (2024)
Competence Development and Employability Expectations: A Gender Perspective of Mobility Programmes in Higher Education	Álamo-Vera et al., (2020)
Development and validation of contextual measures of sexual harassment perceptions, experiences, and coping for women employees in Ethiopian hospitality workplaces	Worke, Koricha, & Debelew (2022)
Does the gender of hospitality employees affect the definition of wages in Spain?	Sánchez-Cubo & Mondéjar-Jiménez (2023)
Estimating commute-travel implications of telecommuting by female employees in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Jaff & Hamsa (2018)
Evaluation of the Time allocation for Work and Personal Life among Employed Population in Lithuania from Gender Perspective	Lydeka & Tauraitė (2020)
Gender (in)equality and work-life (im)balance in tourism and hospitality labour: perspectives of tourism organisations in Portugal	Costa et al., (2023)
Gender inequality in the culinary profession in tourism from the perspective of university students with working experiences in culinary	Türkmenbaş & Karaman (2024)
Gender, religion, and sociospatial (im)mobilities: toward an intersectional framework for muslim female solo travel	Rostami & Trupp (2025)
Job Insecurity, Family Functionality and Mental Health: A Comparative Study between Male and Female Hospitality Workers	Vargas-Jiménez et al., (2020)
Leisure time physical activity among employed and unemployed women in Poland	Biernat & Piątkowska (2017)
Sustainability and the Tourism and Hospitality Workforce: A Thematic Analysis	Baum et al., (2016)
The Travel Behaviour of Polish Women and Adaptation of Transport Systems to Their Needs	Nosal Hoy & Puławska-Obiedowska (2021)
Tourism and the SDGs: An Analysis of Economic Growth, Decent Employment, and Gender Equality in the European Union (2009-2018)	Peña-Sánchez et al., (2020)
Tourism, job vulnerability and income inequality during the COVID-19 pandemic: A global perspective	Sun et al., (2022)
A qualitative analysis of remote employees' work – life harmonization practices and their gendered discourses	Simionescu (Vlăsceanu) (2024)
A widening parental leisure gap: The family as a site for late modern differentiation and convergence in leisure time within Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States	Stalker (2011)
Dancing and days out: The role of social events in British Women's Trade Unionism in the early twentieth century	Hunt (2011)
Entrepreneurship as a job opportunity for women graduates in tourism; [el emprendimiento como oportunidad laboral para las mujeres graduadas en turismo]	López-Gómez (2023)
Factors influencing women's employment in tourism in relation to gender stereotypes in European countries	Kuhnová et al., (2025)

Gender and Work in Amazon Tourism: ethnography of the material conditions of riverine women	Laborda et al., (2025)
Gendered aspects of Leisure-time teachers' care-social and physical dimensions	Hjalmarsson et al., (2017)
Green inclusive leadership, promotion focus, employee gender and green creativity	Orekoya et al., (2026)
Impact of personal and labour factors in hospitality wages: a gender view	Ons-Cappa et al., (2017)
Job Satisfaction and Gender in Rural Tourist Accommodations in the Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche, Andalusia, Spain	Trillo Rodríguez et al., (2025)
Self-employment of women through associations in the rural areas of sirinicka zupa	Maksimović et al., (2019)
Social Justice in the Domestic Realm: Time Poverty and Wellbeing during the COVID-19 Pandemic	Nichols (2025)
Subordination of women in rural tourism: a review of case studies; [la subordinación de las mujeres en el turismo rural: una revisión de estudios de caso]	Cruz Coria et al., (2023)
The challenges of women's right to work and leisure in Ecuador; [Les défis du droit des femmes au travail et aux loisirs en Équateur]; [Los retos del derecho al trabajo y al ocio de las mujeres en Ecuador*]	Mora Bernal et al., (2021)
The Glass Ceiling: Career Progression Barriers for Female Employees in the South African Hospitality Industry	Mwashita, Zungu, & Abrahams (2020)
The Influence of Cultural Differences on Gender Issues in Tourism and Hospitality Employment: A Grounded Theory Analysis	Vithayaporn (2023)
Tourism and female participation in two indigenous communities in the highlands region of chiapas. Progress and challenges	Oseguera-Arias & Sánchez-Morales (2024)
When coffee was banned: strategies of labour and leisure among Stockholm's poor women, 1794-1796 and 1799-1802	Knutsson & Hodacs (2023)
Why should gender differences in hospitality really matter? A study of personnel's service orientation and job satisfaction in hotels	Petrović et al., (2014)
Women Participation in Rural Tourism: A Case of Ella, Sri Lanka	Rasanjali et al., (2021)
Women's Role in Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction in the Travel Industry-An Evidence from the Urban Setting	Gajić et al., (2021)

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

As illustrated in Figure 2, the distribution of the primary research themes identified in the analysed studies on women's labour force participation in the tourism industry is presented. Descriptively, the most prevalent themes are gender inequality and work-life balance, with six entries each. Labor Conditions is the second most prevalent, with five entries. The remaining themes, which are less frequently addressed, encompass Mobility and Migration, Human Capital, Workplace Safety, and Transport and Travel, with each of these themes appearing on three occasions within the reviewed articles.

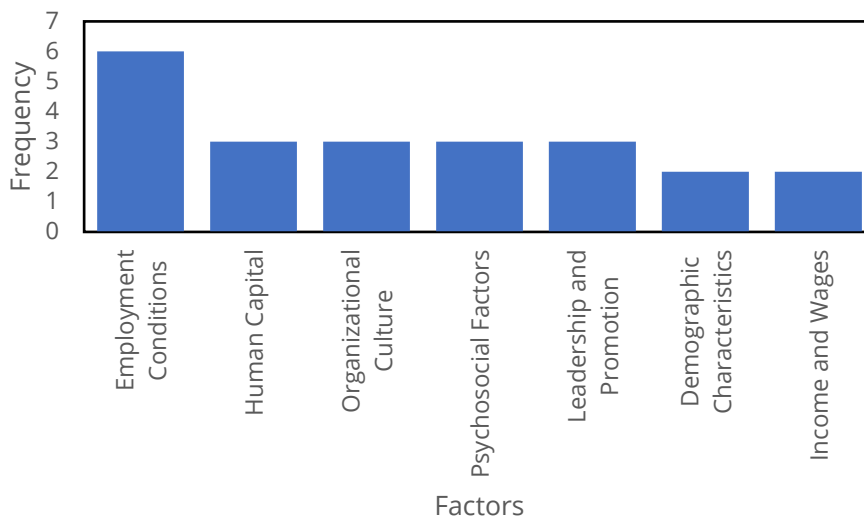
Figure 2 – Thematic trends in female labor force participation in tourism



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

As illustrated in Figure 3, the distribution of the primary determinants of women's labour force participation, as identified in the analysed studies on the tourism industry, is presented. Descriptively, 'Employment Conditions' is the most prevalent, with six entries. It is evident that Human Capital, Organizational Culture, Psychosocial Factors, and Leadership and Promotion are all present, with each of these areas having three entries. It is evident that both 'Demographic Characteristics' and 'Income and Wages' feature in each of the studies that have been included in the review.

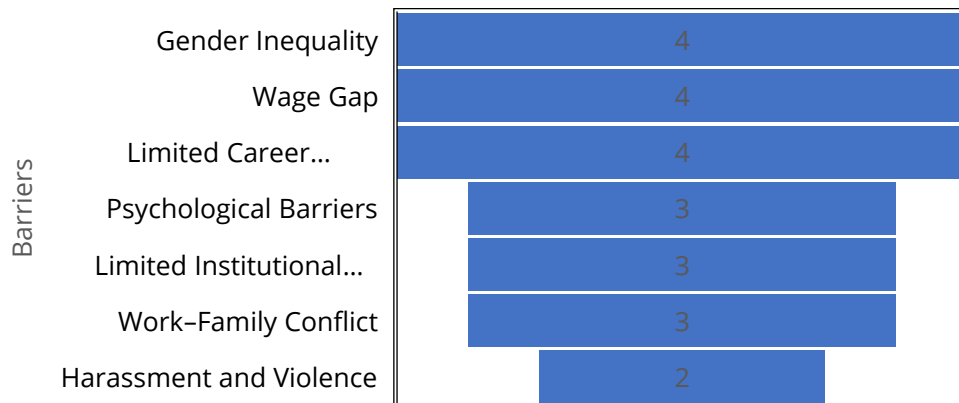
Figure 3 – Determinants of female labour force participation



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

As illustrated in Figure 4, the distribution of the primary barriers to employment identified in the analysed studies on women's labour force participation in the tourism industry is presented. A descriptive analysis of the most prevalent barriers reveals that gender inequality, wage disparity, and limited career advancement are the predominant issues, each with four entries. The identification of psychological barriers limited institutional support, and work-family conflict is also noted, with three entries each. As demonstrated in the review of relevant studies, instances of harassment and violence have been observed on two separate occasions.

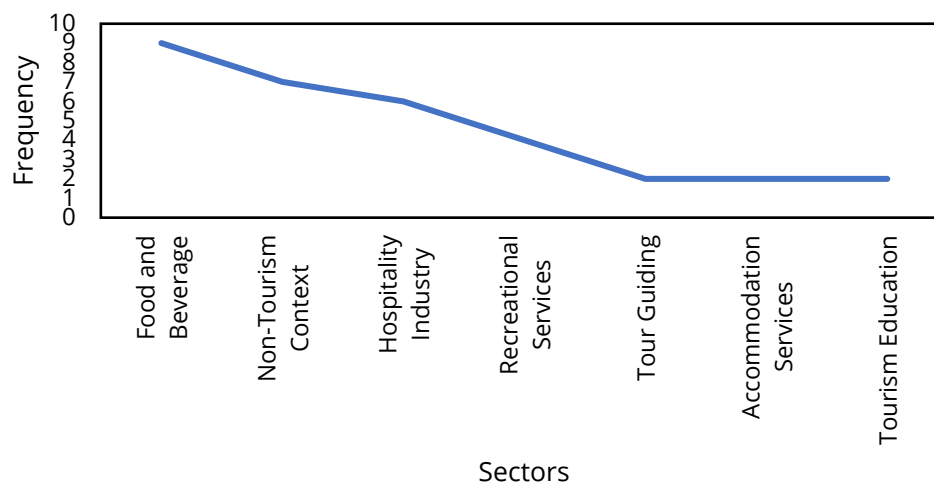
Figure 4 – Barriers to employment in tourism



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

Figure 5 presents the distribution of the main tourism sectors associated with women's labour force participation, as identified in the analysed studies. A descriptive analysis reveals that the most prevalent sector is Food and Beverage, with nine entries. The Non-Tourism Context is represented by seven entries, followed by the Hospitality Industry with six. Recreational Services is also identified with four entries. Finally, Tour Guiding, Accommodation Services, and Tourism Education each appear twice in the studies included in the review.

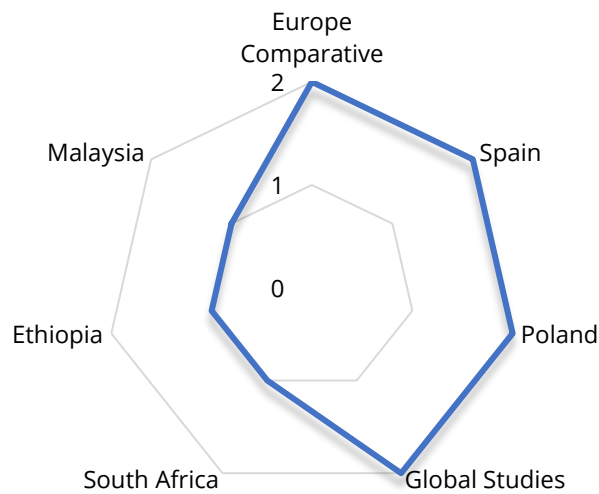
Figure 5 – Tourism sectors of female labour participation



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

As illustrated in Figure 6, the distribution of the countries or regions of study identified in the analysed articles on women's labour force participation in the tourism industry is presented. Europe, Comparative, Spain, Poland, and Global Studies are listed descriptively, with each appearing twice in the reviewed literature. Several studies conducted in South Africa, Ethiopia and Malaysia are identified. Each of these appears once within the set of research considered in the systematic review.

Figure 6 – Countries and regions of study analysed



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

The results of the systematic review were organised according to the research questions, thus enabling the identified scientific evidence to be structured into several analytical dimensions. The findings are presented by identifying thematic trends, factors influencing women's labour force participation, barriers to employment, tourism sectors where this participation is concentrated, and the geographical contexts in which the studies are conducted. This organization facilitates the integration of the results from the analysed literature and offers a systematised perspective on the phenomenon of women's labour force participation in the tourism industry from an analytical and structured standpoint.

DISCUSSION

This section conducts an analysis of the results of the systematic review on women's labour force participation in the tourism industry, in accordance with the study's objective of examining the available scientific evidence in this field. It is the contention of the present study that the primary trends and patterns present in the extant literature may be interpreted considering the findings that have been identified. The discussion is organised into several sections. Firstly, the analysis of the results and their comparison with previous studies is developed. Secondly, a conceptual framework derived from the findings is proposed. Finally, the theoretical, political and practical implications of the study are addressed, as well as the limitations of the research and the main lines of future research.

RESULTS ANALYSIS

Firstly, the extant literature on women's labour force participation in tourism focuses on structural problems linked to gender inequality and work-life balance. These tensions are indicative of characteristics inherent to tourism work, such as demanding working conditions and flexible schedules that make it difficult to balance work and family responsibilities. As demonstrated in previous studies (see Costa et al., 2023), these inequalities are associated with occupational segregation, wage gaps, and the unequal distribution of time between men and women. Moreover, the ongoing impact of domestic work on women's participation in the labour market has been a subject of ongoing research (Lydeka & Tauraitė, 2020).

Conversely, the participation of women in the tourism sector is influenced by a complex interplay of structural, organisational and personal factors. The extant literature underscores the significance of employment conditions, human capital, and organisational culture in the generation of job opportunities. A plethora of studies have demonstrated that working conditions, salary levels, and market characteristics exert a significant influence on women's entry into and retention within the tourism sector (Sánchez-Cubo & Mondéjar-Jiménez, 2023). Furthermore, psychosocial and workplace safety factors, including harassment in hospitality settings, have been demonstrated to influence women's work experience (Worke et al., 2022).

Furthermore, barriers to employment are related to the structural dynamics of the labour market and institutional limitations that affect women's professional development. The extant literature draws attention to the enduring presence of gender inequalities, remuneration disparities, and constrained prospects for progression within the domain of tourism organisations. Moreover, factors associated with work-life balance influence women's job retention. In this regard, the promotion of decent work and the reduction of labour inequalities represent significant challenges for the sector (Peña-Sánchez et al., 2020). Gender differences have also been identified in skills development and employability expectations (Álamo-Vera et al., 2020).

In addition, the participation of women in the workforce is predominantly focused on sectors such as hospitality, food services, and customer service, which are distinguished by their high levels of interaction with users. This concentration is indicative of the occupational structure of the sector, wherein women predominantly undertake operational and service roles. As indicated by previous studies (Petrović et al., 2014), the experience and satisfaction of female workers in the hotel industry is influenced by organisational dynamics and working conditions. Furthermore, factors related to job mobility and work organisation affect female participation in tourism contexts (Jaff & Hamsa, 2018).

Research on female labour force participation in tourism is primarily concentrated in European contexts and international comparative studies. This distribution is indicative of the academic interest in analysing gender dynamics in established tourism markets and regions that have equality policies in place. Recent studies have highlighted the relevance of tourism as a sector for examining female participation and labour inequalities in different socioeconomic contexts (Kuhnová et al., 2025), as well as an area with the potential to promote employment opportunities and female entrepreneurship (López-Gómez, 2023).

COMPARISON OF RESULTS WITH OTHER STUDIES

In comparison with previous research on gender, the labour market and tourism, this study identifies that women's labour force participation in the tourism industry is conditioned by structural, organisational and sociocultural factors that extend beyond the individual characteristics of female employment. These results align with those reported by Kumari et al. (2026), who highlight barriers related to gender discrimination, limited access to resources, and the need for institutional and community support.

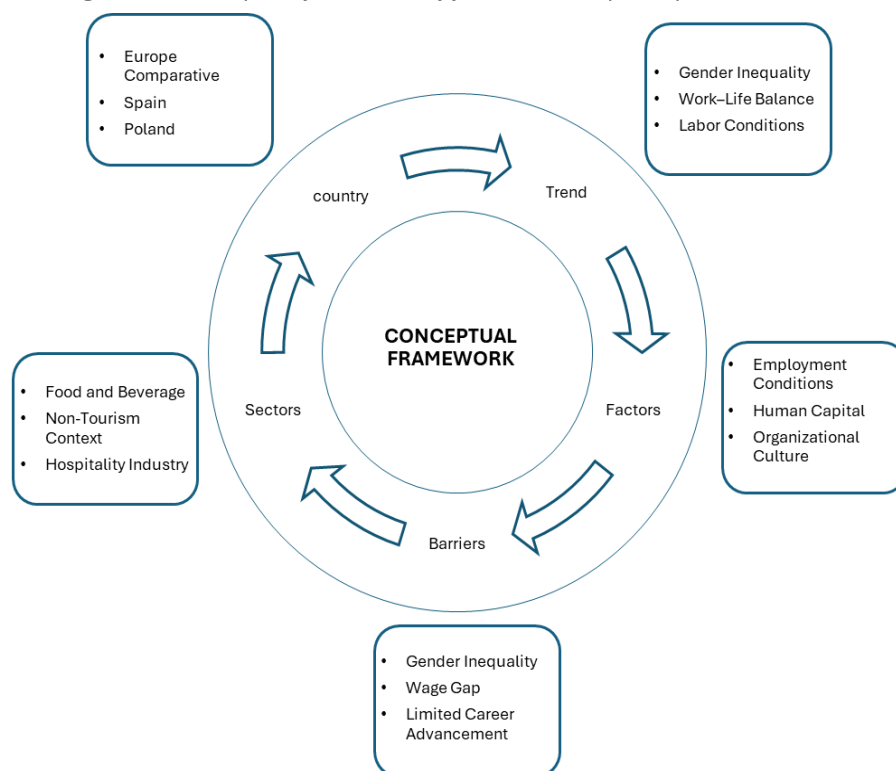
Convergences can also be identified with the work of Kiran et al. (2026), who emphasised the importance of aligning training, career paths, recruitment systems and labour regulations to expand employment opportunities. These findings also relate to Tuyen (2026), who highlights the role of human capital and professional skills. However, the extant literature continues to focus on structural problems such as gender inequality, work-life balance, and occupational segregation.

The findings of this study are also in accordance with the conclusions of Nathan et al. (2026), who asserted that labour inequalities are associated with power relations that engender wage disparities, occupational segregation, and job insecurity. However, this review broadens the understanding by demonstrating that these barriers vary according to tourism sectors and territorial contexts. Finally, it identifies points of agreement with Chhabra et al. (2026), who highlight the role of female entrepreneurship in promoting sustainable tourism and economic empowerment.

PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As illustrated in Figure 7, the conceptual framework has been developed from a systematic review of the literature on the labour force participation of women in the tourism industry. The model integrates the main dimensions identified in the extant literature, including research trends, the determining factors of women's labour force participation, barriers to employment, the tourism sectors where this participation is concentrated, and the geographical contexts in which the studies are conducted. The articulation of these elements enables an integrated representation of the relationship between structural, organisational and territorial conditions that shape women's opportunities for labour market entry and retention in the tourism sector.

Figure 7 – Conceptual framework of female labour participation in tourism



Source: Own elaboration

IMPLICATIONS

The results of this systematic review contribute to the theoretical development of gender, the labour market and tourism by offering an integrated interpretation of the factors influencing women's labour force participation in the sector. The extant literature has addressed this phenomenon from various disciplinary perspectives, resulting in fragmented knowledge about the conditions that influence women's entry into and retention within the tourism workforce. In this context, the study systematically organises the scientific evidence by identifying thematic trends, determining factors, barriers to employment, and tourism

sectors of labour market integration. It proposes a multidimensional analytical perspective that integrates individual capabilities, structural conditions of the labour market, organisational dynamics, and sociocultural factors associated with gender inequality.

From a conceptual standpoint, the findings contribute to an expanded understanding of work organisation in tourism, a sector that is characterised by high female participation and, concomitantly, by persistent inequalities in access to employment, job stability, and opportunities for advancement. The review indicates that the extant literature focuses on issues such as work-life balance, the gender pays gap, occupational segregation, and limitations in career advancement within tourism organisations. The findings indicate a correlation between women's labour force participation and the institutional frameworks of the tourism market. It is emphasised that employment opportunities are contingent on both individual capabilities and the organisational structure of work, labour policies, and the social norms that govern the distribution of productive and reproductive labour.

The results of the study also provide relevant elements for the formulation of public policies aimed at promoting gender equality in the tourism sector. The identification of structural, organisational and sociocultural barriers is indicative of the necessity to design comprehensive policies that promote decent working conditions, equal pay and greater opportunities for professional development for women. Moreover, the necessity of implementing measures that facilitate work-life balance is emphasised, including, but not limited to, flexible work arrangements, childcare services, and programs to support women's job retention.

In this context, the study also highlights the role of educational and vocational training institutions in the strengthening of women's human capital. The implementation of technical, professional and business training programmes has been identified as a potential catalyst for the expansion of employment and entrepreneurship opportunities within the tourism sector. However, the extant evidence indicates that the development of individual skills must be complemented by institutional transformations that reduce the structural barriers limiting women's access to and retention in certain segments of the tourism labour market.

From a sector management perspective, the results suggest the importance of promoting more inclusive organisational strategies within tourism companies. These include the establishment of work environments that are free from discrimination, the implementation of transparent systems for promotion and compensation, and the development of training and leadership programs specifically designed for women. Moreover, the review indicates that women's participation in the labour force is predominantly concentrated in the hospitality, food service, and customer service sectors. This phenomenon reflects patterns of occupational segregation that serve to perpetuate gender stereotypes within the sector.

The theoretical, political and managerial contributions derived from this study facilitate a comprehensive understanding of women's labour force participation in tourism as a multidimensional phenomenon, in which structural, organisational, social and territorial factors interact. The articulation between research trends, determining factors, barriers to access, sectors of employment, and geographic contexts provides a solid analytical foundation to guide future research and support the design of public policies and organizational strategies aimed at strengthening equal opportunities in the tourism sector. In this manner, the study contributes to the consolidation of scientific knowledge on gender and employment in tourism, as well as offering input for the promotion of more inclusive and equitable work environments.

LIMITATIONS

The present systematic review highlights methodological limitations that must be considered when interpreting the results. Initially, the search strategy concentrated on high-impact academic databases, principally Scopus and Web of Science. Despite the fact that these platforms guarantee scientific quality and broad international visibility, their exclusive use may restrict the identification of studies published in other regional databases, institutional repositories, or grey literature. This may result in a reduction in the possibility of covering all existing academic production on female labour force participation in the tourism industry. Secondly, the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied during the selection process influence the final composition of the analysed studies. The decision to consider only peer-reviewed articles with complete methodological information strengthens the scientific rigour of the review but may exclude relevant research disseminated in other academic formats or in languages other than those included in the search strategy.

Another limitation pertains to the heterogeneity of the included studies. The extant literature demonstrates significant variations in theoretical approaches, research methodologies, geographical contexts, and units of analysis. These variations impede the direct comparison of results and thus limit the scope of potential generalisations. This diversity is indicative of the multidisciplinary nature of the field, yet it concomitantly introduces challenges for the systematic integration of scientific evidence. Finally, it is possible that biases associated with both the publication process and study selection may be present. The scientific production process is inclined to favour research that yields significant or novel results, thereby generating a potential publication bias that serves to reduce the visibility of studies that yield neutral results. Furthermore, the implementation of eligibility criteria may necessitate interpretation during the review process. It is important to note that these conditions do not invalidate the results obtained but rather require that the findings be interpreted considering the methodological scope and limitations inherent in the review design.

LINES OF FUTURE RESEARCH

Considering the lacunae identified in the systematic review, several research lines are proposed with the objective of enhancing our understanding of female labour force participation in the tourism industry. Firstly, it is necessary to delve deeper into the analysis of the structural dynamics that influence women's entry into and retention within the tourism sector. Despite the extant literature addressing issues related to gender inequality, work-life balance, and occupational segregation, further studies are required to analyse more precisely the interaction between institutional, organisational, and sociocultural factors that shape women's career paths. In this regard, future research can develop analytical models that integrate economic, organisational and social variables to more comprehensively explain labour market participation processes in different segments of the tourism industry.

Secondly, there is a necessity to incorporate novel methodological approaches that broaden the analysis of this phenomenon. A review of the extant literature reveals a preponderance of descriptive studies and analyses based on secondary data. This suggests the advisability of strengthening the use of mixed methodologies that combine quantitative and qualitative approaches. The application of longitudinal designs, comparative analyses across countries, advanced statistical models, and ethnographic approaches can contribute to a more precise understanding of the factors influencing female labour force participation in diverse tourism contexts. Moreover, comparative approaches would facilitate the identification of common patterns and structural differences between tourism labour markets at different levels of development.

Another pertinent line of research pertains to the analysis of novel occupational domains within the tourism sector. The extant literature suggests that female labour force participation is concentrated primarily in hospitality, food services and customer service. However, the expansion of new tourism modalities, such as sustainable tourism, wellness tourism, cultural tourism, and digital tourism, raises the need to analyse how new forms of female labour force participation are taking shape in emerging segments of the sector. The analysis of these transformations can yield pertinent insights into the diversification of professional opportunities and the evolution of occupational structures within the tourism industry.

Furthermore, research should be expanded to encompass geographical contexts that have received less attention in the scientific literature. The review reveals a significant concentration of studies in European contexts or in comparative analyses of international scope. This trend evinces the necessity to fortify knowledge production in regions where tourism constitutes a strategic sector for economic and social development. It is imperative to promote research on female labour force participation in tourism in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and other emerging economies, considering the institutional, cultural, and economic particularities that characterise these contexts. The analysis of these scenarios will facilitate comprehension of the way gender inequalities interact with tourism development processes in diverse geographical areas.

Ultimately, subsequent research endeavours should seek to explore the extent to which public policies, business strategies and territorial development initiatives contribute to the promotion of female labour force participation in the tourism sector. A comprehensive analysis encompassing labour equality policies, vocational training programs, female entrepreneurship initiatives, and inclusive organisational management practices is imperative to identify successful experiences and replicable models aimed at promoting gender equity in the sector.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study examines the complexity that characterises women's labour force participation in the tourism industry. A review of the extant literature indicates that this phenomenon cannot be explained solely by individual variables or isolated career decisions. Rather, it is the result of the interaction between labour market structures, organisational dynamics, and sociocultural conditions that influence women's career paths. Within this theoretical framework, a systematic analysis of scientific evidence reveals that the integration of women into the tourism labour market is shaped within specific institutional contexts that condition both access to employment opportunities and possibilities for professional development within the sector. From a theoretical standpoint, the study offers an integrative perspective that contributes to the organisation of existing knowledge on gender and employment in tourism. The systematization of the extant literature facilitates the articulation of diverse analytical dimensions that have often been examined in isolation, thus fostering a broader understanding of the phenomenon.

This multidimensional approach serves to strengthen the field of research by demonstrating that the analysis of female labour force participation must be undertaken by simultaneously considering the structure of the labour market, organisational conditions, and the social dynamics that influence the distribution of work. From a pragmatic standpoint, the study underscores the necessity of integrating a gender equality approach into the management of the tourism sector. A comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence female labour force participation is imperative for the effective design of organisational strategies

that promote more inclusive and equitable work environments. Consequently, the analysis emphasises the necessity to reinforce public policies that are designed to guarantee fair working conditions, expand professional development opportunities, and facilitate the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities.

This study acknowledges the pertinence of tourism as a domain for the analysis of contemporary transformations in work and gender inequalities in labour markets. The integration of different analytical dimensions provides a solid foundation for guiding future research and supporting the design of policies and strategies that foster more inclusive work environments within the tourism sector. The study provides a conceptual and analytical framework that contributes to the academic understanding of female labour participation and its relationship with the economic and social dynamics of tourism.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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