

# Application of a gender perspective in tourism research: a theoretical and practical approach

Gender  
perspective in  
tourism  
research

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Cristina Figueroa-Domecq  
*School of Hospitality and Tourism Management,  
University of Surrey, Guildford, UK, and*

Mónica Segovia-Perez  
*Faculty of Social Science and Law, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid, Spain*

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper aims to present a conceptual model that identifies and relates the different approaches and thematic areas in the research area of tourism and gender.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The design of the conceptual model is based on a critical review of the literature and the evolution of feminist paradigms and theories.

**Findings** – The aforementioned theoretical frameworks are the basis for the further development of feminist studies and a gender perspective in the tourism industry research area, including research design, objectives, methodologies, analysis and result's presentation.

**Research limitations/implications** – Based on literature review, is theoretical.

**Originality/value** – Presentation of a conceptual model around the gender perspective in tourism, that leads to the identification of important research opportunities in this area.

**Keywords** Gender, Tourism

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is an extremely important sector for women (Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2020). This relevance is based not only on important employment, business and entrepreneurship opportunities (Muñoz-Bullón, 2009; Hanson, 2009) but also on its impact on women's well-being and leisure experiences (Berdychevsky *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, the United Nations (UN), through its sustainable development goals (SDGs), defines gender equality as the fifth priority goal, as a key issue for growth and development.

Tourism research shows a growing interest in applying a gender perspective (Tribe, 2006; Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2015; Pritchard and Morgan, 2017; Mooney, 2020; Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2020; Moreno Alarcón and Cole, 2019; Segovia-Pérez *et al.*, 2019b, Costa *et al.*,

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2017) to studies in marketing, human resources, entrepreneurship, development, planning and many other areas. At the same time, it is demonstrated that this area of research has a wide margin for development and improvement (Tribe, 2006; Pritchard and Morgan, 2017; Munar *et al.*, 2017; Chambers *et al.*, 2017; Korstanje, 2018). In addition, as highlighted by the world tourism organization for the UN (2011, 2019), the combination of tourism and gender is an area that requires a deeper understanding of the relationship between the participation of a wide range of social actors, namely, researchers, entrepreneurs, employees, tourists, public administration and Non-Governmental Organizations, etc. (Pritchard, 2018).

The implementation of a gender approach in the evaluation of tourism has shown notable differences between men and women for an extensive set of issues (e.g. employment, entrepreneurship and demand). Often, as a result of social stereotypes roles and the social construction of gender this difference turns into a disadvantage for the latter, and higher vulnerability. Consequently, tourism research helps with the identification, understanding and dissemination needed so as to reduce gender inequality.

Even though gender studies in this industry are increasingly relevant tourism (Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2020) as a research area has been developed in parallel with feminist and gender studies, and they rarely intersect or crossover in a sustained or significant way (Pritchard, 2018; Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2015). This lack of critical thinking and the resulting failure of many researchers to fully incorporate gender in the evaluation of the tourist experience, has often led to partial and superficial conclusions (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000). For this reason, it is necessary to broaden and deepen gender research in tourism applying a true feminist perspective.

Another relevant question in the analysis of the evolution of this area of knowledge is understanding the reasons behind this limited implementation of feminist theories. At this point, the question arises whether the production of knowledge in tourism has reflected a certain sexism and to what extent this has influenced the development of the tourism and gender area itself. Tribe (2006) states that tourism research carries a subtle power to define, skew, objectify and prioritize certain topics over others, give preference to certain areas of research and researchers and promote certain forms of empirical, quantitative and qualitative analysis and other methods. There is also a growing concern about whether the situation of women within tourism academia (Munar, 2017) has a negative impact on the development of this area of research. Pritchard and Morgan (2017) show that although women make up 45% of academia, they only occupy 20% of the most important positions (Morley, 2014), earn 80% of what their peers earn (West *et al.*, 2013) and there is a gender gap in assigned research projects (Watson and Hjorth, 2015), sabbaticals (Else, 2015), lecturing evaluations (MacNeill *et al.*, 2014), editorial teams in research journals (Morley, 2014), citation levels (Knobloch-Westerwick *et al.*, 2013) and selection processes (Van den Brink and Benschop, 2012). These results indicate that despite the rich and diverse tradition of research on the gender dimensions of tourism, such studies have had little impact on the transformation of unequal gender power relations in the sector itself (Ferguson and Moreno Alarcón, 2015).

Therefore, the aim of this article is to create a conceptual model based on the relationships between the different areas of research in the area of tourism and gender. This model expands and adapts the contributions of Segovia-Pérez and Figueroa-Domecq (2018) and Segovia-Pérez *et al.* (2019a) and presents the necessary main concepts for the application of a gender perspective in tourism research. This is supported by the evolution in feminist paradigms, the new potential research methods and the project's design, from a gender perspective. This conceptual framework aims to provide a theoretical framework that enhances the development of gender research in tourism.

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## 2. Theoretical approach to research from a feminist perspective

One of the first issues to distinguish to understand the tourism and gender binomial is the difference between the concepts and sex and gender and their consequences at a level of roles and stereotypes (Segovia-Pérez and Figueroa-Domecq, 2018). This distinction, and its implications, has been the subject of debate and multiple theories in the social sciences. Usually, none of us think about this difference and what it means, as it is a natural behavior that we routinely perform in our daily activities (Marchbank and Letherby, 2014). However, this distinction is the basis of different life trajectories and an important set of inequalities between men and women.

Sex refers to the biological and anatomical characteristics of the human body and allows us to divide the world into men and women and even a combination of both. In contrast, gender is used to define a social construct that divides what is considered feminine and masculine (Segovia-Pérez and Figueroa-Domecq, 2018). Therefore, gender is a socially established construct that refers to a “way of being” in society, which includes a type of character or personality, beliefs, values, behavior and the different attitudes of men and women. Through this construct, people learn to behave according to their gender, creating and recreating it in daily interactions, following the normative ideas and socially assigned attitudes for each gender (men and women) (West and Zimmerman, 1987, 2009). Therefore, gender is made up of its own individual self-definition, which has been socially learned through the expectations of others and, the cultural expectations that imply what our behavior should be in a context of interaction (West and Zimmerman, 1987, 2009).

Gender roles and gender stereotypes emerge from cultural representations of what is expected of a woman and a man (Colás Bravo and Villaciervos Moreno, 2007). Place is identified as being crucial in their construction, as gendered structures relate to specific places (Hanson, 2009). Based on these, individuals build their own existence internalizing identity codes and signs, conceived and culturally agreed (Colás Bravo and Villaciervos Moreno, 2007) and maintained through the admiration or disapproval of others (Eagly *et al.*, 2004). These stereotypes mark the division of society, as it assigns a different function/role depending on gender. According to Eagly *et al.* (2004), there is a correspondence between the assigned roles and the characteristics that are considered typical of people (correspondence bias). In this way, the allocation of family roles (domestic and family) to women is related to their alleged greater capacity for care, kindness and sensitivity; while men are assigned the role of family provider because of its characteristics associated with autonomy, domination and power. Therefore, stereotypes and gender roles definitely mark the personal, family and professional trajectory throughout women and men’s lives (Machin-Rincón *et al.*, 2020). Nor can it be forgotten, as Moreno Alarcon (2018) point out, that gender tends to become a category used to measure the number of women and men, without considering qualitative differences in terms of presence, participation and the exercise of rights.

This social construction of gender has consequences at three levels in tourism, namely, individual level, interactional and institutional (Segovia-Pérez and Figueroa-Domecq, 2018). According to Risman (1998), these three levels are interrelated, and one cannot be understood without the other. At the *individual level*, the personal conception of the self as belonging to one gender or another is considered. It is the way in which we are configured and developed as women or men: it shapes our personality, our individual feminine or masculine self, based on how we assume different behaviors, values, beliefs and preferences and make decisions. At the *interactional level*, men and women must behave as expected in relation to others depending on their gender, even when they occupy identical structural positions (Risman, 1998). This is what Eagly *et al.* (2004) described as “gender role expectations” (Risman, 1998) and what West and Zimmerman (1987, 2009) conceptualized as

*doing gender*. Finally, the *institutional level* explains how the social, cultural and organizational structures reproduce gender differences (division of labor, hierarchies and power) dividing institutions and society according to it. The components of the institutional level are related to the maintenance of power and resources mainly by men. The thin red line between each level and how the three are related should not be ignored.

### 2.1 Evolution of feminist theories

The implementation of a relevant and challenging gender perspective in tourism research, requires understanding the evolution of theoretical feminism frameworks.

The feminist movement is difficult to classify, but it is characterized by its critical vision regarding how gender is socially constructed and its implications upon gender roles and power relations. Feminism has always confronted this system and has called for changes in institutions, cultural practices, location of natural resources and symbols to produce real changes in the reality of disparity (Thomas and Ehrkamp, 2013). Having this common objective, the feminist movement has developed in three great stages or waves, namely, feminist empiricism or liberal empiricism; standpoint feminism and post-structuralist feminism (Bhandar, 2002).

The first wave in feminism arose with the suffragette movement and industrialization of the mid-19th century, which fought for equal rights for women as citizens (Bhandar, 2002). The second wave took place in the sixties, influenced by Simone de Beauvoir's book "The second sex," published in 1949. Feminist movements began to identify the weight that cultural and social forces had in perpetuating the subordination of women. The second wave incorporates different movements in its objectives and political perspectives (McPherson, 2002): are Marxist feminism, Socialist feminism, Cultural feminism and some movements related to Black feminism (Thompson, 2002). The third wave is a broad field of academic and social work that emerged in the 1990s, where the social and personal reality of young women and adolescents was emphasized (Starr, 2002). This wave is defined by five main perspectives (Mann and Huffman, 2005): intersectional theory, postmodernism/post-structuralism; post-colonial feminist theories and the agenda of young feminists. Queer theories are also central to this third wave, although many places them in the fourth wave of feminism.

### 2.2 Evolution in the application of a gender perspective and feminist theories in tourism

Tourism research experienced in the 1990s a popularization of a feminist gender approach in tourism studies. This approach attempted to understand women's experiences and attitudes, which were irrelevant in the existing androcentric representation of their lives at the time (Boley *et al.*, 2017). These first investigations focused on evaluating the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in tourist destinations (Ireland, 1993; McKay, 1993), gendered differences in perceptions of tourism at different stages of development (Harvey *et al.*, 1995), the predominance of certain power relations that contribute to gender disparities (Kinnaird and Hall, 1996; Wilkinson and Pratiwi, 1995) and economic independence for women through tourism (Purcell, 1997).

An important milestone for the development of this area of research is the Annals of Tourism Research monograph in 1995, "gender in tourism." This monograph was published around the same time that Vivian Kinnaird and Derek Hall edited the book *Tourism, A Gender Analysis* (1994), at a time of reinvention of Tourism Studies in both the USA and Europe (Swain, 2005).

These two publications identify two important periods (Boley *et al.*, 2017). The first encompasses the period 1940–1970 when women, or the gender perspective, are completely

invisible in tourism research. The second period includes the 1970s, until the end of the 1980s. Their strategy is based on the idea of “add women and stir.” Research focuses on including the gender variable and analyzing the gendered behavior of women, within the family or as a consumer of tourism products.

From these publications, the concept of gender in tourism was defined for the first time.

Gender refers to a system of culturally constructed identities, expressed in ideologies of masculinity and femininity, interacting with socially structured relationships in divisions of labor and leisure, sexuality, and power between women and men (Swain, 1995, pp. 258-259).

A gender perspective was also included in consumer behavior research, tourism development, gender identities, relationships between hosts and tourism and the impact of gendered power relations in tourism development and the design of tourist destinations (Swain, 1995). In short, in this period the foundations were laid for the application of a gender perspective in tourism activity.

An important contribution was also made by Kinnaird and Hall (1994). They defined the three basic pillars on which to understand the reality of tourism and gender. In the first place, tourism activities are built on gendered, complex and varied social realities and relationships that are usually hierarchical and unequal. Secondly, gender relations shape and are shaped by the interconnection of economic, political, social, cultural and environmental factors of those societies in which tourism is carried out. Finally, equality and inequality are not only defined by gender but also by age, races, religion or classes, including the concept of diversity.

Based on Kinnaird and Hall's (1994) pillars, four dimensions or areas, are defined in tourism research:

- Gendered tourist, through research around the motivations, behavior and marketing activities of the tourist;
- Gendered host, specifically who is carrying out the work, how this distribution of work is constructed and how the patriarchal power structures are articulated;
- Gendered marketing, focused on sexuality and gender relations; and
- Gendered tourism landscape.

These research lines can be added to or complemented by those proposed by Pritchard and Morgan (2000):

- Gendered employee, which analyzes the economic relationship between women and tourism through employment;
- Gender and sex tourism, which assesses the nature of sex tourism between residents and tourists; and
- Gender and sustainability, in relation to the fact that sustainability cannot be achieved without real gender equality.

Research demonstrates that there has been an important diversification of tourism and gender studies, with respect to previous periods (Boley *et al.*, 2017; Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2015). A bibliometric study around gender research in tourism (Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2015) shows how practically half of the identified articles (46.5%) related to the gendered tourist, while 31.6% of the articles focused on gendered host activities. A deeper level of analysis showed that the main topics covered by these articles were gender and development (10.3%), sex tourism (5.8%), entrepreneurship (5.2%) and consumer behavior (5.2%).

The fact is that currently tourism and gender research area addresses very diverse topics, such as gender equity in the tourism planning process (Ferguson and Moreno Alarcón, 2015); the impact of gender on tourism research and academia (Pritchard and Morgan, 2017; Chambers *et al.*, 2017), tourism, gender and poverty reduction (Tucker and Boonabaana, 2012); the economic independence of women through tourism (Acharya and Halpenny, 2013); the role that gender plays in residents' perceptions of tourism development control and in their subsequent political support for tourism (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2010); entrepreneurship and female empowerment (Kimbu and Ngoasong, 2016) and many others.

At this point, it is important to consider the influence of international organizations such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the United Nations – World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). These organization have improved public awareness around the importance of gender equality in the tourism industry (Boley *et al.*, 2017; Ferguson and Moreno Alarcón, 2015). The importance given to gender mainstreaming by international organizations has been increasing since the 1970s, when feminist movements were internationalizing and expanding (Reeves, 2012). According to Palomo *et al.* (2017), an important milestone was the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979; it set the foundations of the future international global commitments, treaties, conventions and resolutions on women's rights (Cassola *et al.*, 2014). In 1995, the Platform for Action was adopted at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, where it was recognized that without the active participation of women and their incorporation at all levels of decision-making, equality, development and peace goals could not be achieved (Palomo *et al.*, 2017, p. 124).

Specifically, in the tourism sector, there were three important reports published by the UNWTO and ILO, namely, *Global Report of Women in Tourism* (UNWTO/UN Women, 2011, 2019) and the report *International perspectives on women and work in hotels, catering and tourism* by the ILO (Baum, 2013). These reports demonstrate the inequality between women and men working in hotels, restaurants and tourism activities. These reports also acknowledge tourism as an especially well-positioned sector to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, aligned with UN SDGs.

The growing interest in the application of a gender perspective in tourism is a really, and so it is the need to apply and use feminist theories in this regard. Gender as a social structure must be approached and analyzed from a holistic perspective (Segovia-Pérez *et al.*, 2019a, 2019b, Segovia-Pérez and Figueroa-Domecq, 2018) and considering feminist theories. Several theoretical feminist models have been applied to the evaluation of gender's impact on the careers of women and men, the distribution of power among them and the business adventure through tourism (Brush *et al.*, 2009; Risman, 2004; Segovia-Pérez *et al.*, 2019a, 2019b). In tourism, the following feminism perspectives are identified (Aitchison, 2005, 2009) align with the feminist waves: First, *liberal feminism*, which defends reformation within existing structures by challenging the foundations on which these tourism systems and structures are based, focusing on the effect rather than the cause. *Standpoint feminism* encompasses a number of different positions or points of view that address the structural and material disadvantages within society in relation to this sector (*Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, black feminism and radical feminism*). Finally, *post-structuralist feminism* shares a concern about the importance of subjectivity in shaping the interrelationships between material power, ideology and cultural construction. Language, communication and power relations are to be understood and challenged.

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However, in tourism, the implementation of a theoretical feminist model is not so common, and several authors highlight the lack of use of a feminist epistemology in the tourism industry (Tribe, 2006; Pritchard and Morgan, 2017; Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2015).

### 3. Implementation of a gender approach in tourism research

The so-called gender approach has become an indispensable instrument in social research, as it sheds light on the different forms of identity construction of women and men, their particular ways of acting, perceiving, understanding, feeling, speaking and interacting (Inda, 2016). Despite its importance, it has not been sufficiently theoretically and empirically applied in the tourism industry. In this sense, there are still certain stereotypes and biases implicit in research, based on the experiences and expectations of a group of people, mostly men, which entails maintaining their status quo and maintaining the imbalance in research environments (Ministerio de Ciencia e Investigación, 2011; Munar *et al.*, 2017). This is of vital importance in research that includes both the selection of topics and the interpretation of reality.

However, we must be aware that the way in which a researcher investigates is not exempt from some involuntary gender bias. As pointed out by Butler (1990) and West and Zimmerman (1987, 2009), people learn to behave according to their socially constructed gender. In the same way, as researchers, we make gender in the academic world, creating and recreating ideas, views, values, positions, assumptions and interpretations of reality according to what has been socially assigned to each gender. Munar *et al.* (2017) highlights that as researchers, we will always have to assume a certain degree of subjectivity in our viewpoint. Thus, our representations of tourist and academic tourism realities can only be partially true due to the implicit bias that our viewpoint supposes through the masculine or feminine form in which we have learned to interpret reality. For this reason, feminist theorizing proposes an alternative way of doing research (Munar *et al.*, 2017) and also an alternative way of being an academic. Its about engagement with the principles of reflexivity, positionality and reciprocity (Bakas, 2017), emotional commitment (Narayan, 1997), democratic discussion (Intemann, 2011) and association with a specific environment (Anderson *et al.*, 2010). The use of reflexivity allows us to recognize that our point of view in tourism is also socially constructed through a gender viewpoint, at the same time we try to look for the “pure” truth (Munar *et al.*, 2017, p. 6). Therefore, Bakas (2017) considers that taking reflexivity into account is essential, as the researcher is the person who has defined the research topic, the method and writes about its results. It is, therefore, necessary that their beliefs and background be considered part of the research process. Likewise, he introduces two other concepts that are also relevant, namely, positionality and reciprocity. Regarding positioning, when a researcher has a hybrid internal and external perspective because of an internal cultural origin and an external appearance, this can also influence how the investigator is perceived by the participants. This perceived position can, in turn, influence the quantity and type of knowledge that the participants share with the researcher. Finally, reciprocity is based on the belief that researchers and researchees are equal and that research must be mutually beneficial.

The implementation of a gender perspective in research implies its incorporation into all steps, from the design to the presentation of the results (Ruiz-Cantero and Papi-Gálvez, 2007). This means accepting that gender becomes an organizing factor that even defines access to funding and other research resources. Addressing the gender dimension of research implies considering gender as a key analytical and explanatory variable in research. If the relevant gender issues are not taken into account or are approached superficially, the results of the research will be partial (Spanish Ministry of Science and Research, 2011).

3.1 *The implementation of a gender perspective in research design*

The Spanish Ministry of Science and Research (2011) considers that gender-sensitive research has a double focus: it pays attention to the balanced participation of women and men, providing the same opportunities for all and integrates gender into the content of research from the initial idea until the dissemination of the results. Therefore, the design of an investigation from a gender perspective impacts each and every one of the different phases of the investigation (Figure 1):

- Definition of the problem, ideas, objectives and hypotheses of the investigation.
- Development of a research plan to gather the necessary information to respond to said objectives, hypotheses and methodology.
- Design of data analysis.
- Interpretation and publication of reports and articles.

In the first stages of definition of *ideas, research questions, objectives and hypotheses* reflexivity must be considered, as the researcher decides what to investigate, based on their beliefs and background. In this regard, it is also necessary to consider the three previously mentioned dimensions and discern, which are the gender socially constructed factors that influence the tourist problem studied both individually, interactionally and/or institutionally in the tourist field (Segovia-Pérez *et al.*, 2019a, 2019b). Table 1 shows the kind of questions that could be incorporated.

Both the theoretical framework and the formulation of the objectives must consider previous scientific knowledge about the way in which gender and its determinants influence the tourist problem studied and the feminist theories of relevance in the study. In fact, tourism knowledge base on gender issues has grown steadily over the past decades and can

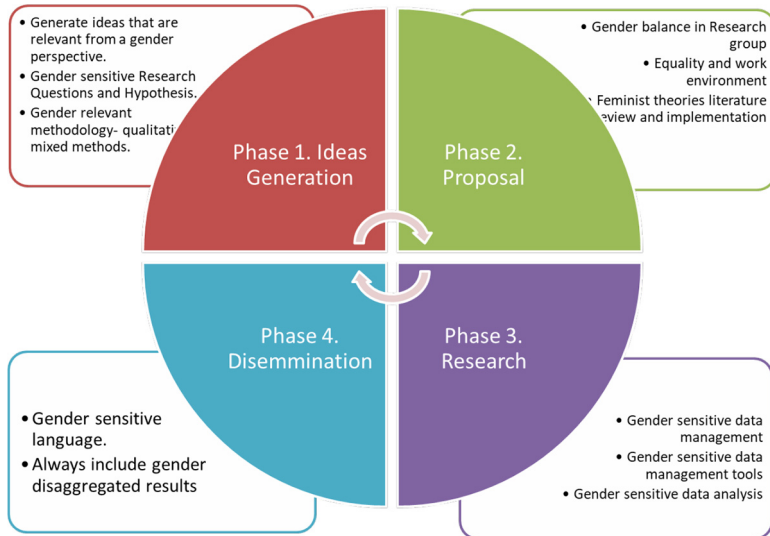


Figure 1.  
Gender in the  
research cycle

Source: Based on The Spanish Ministry of Science and Research (2011)



Individual Level	Interactional Level	Institutional/Sectorial Level
Socialization, personality, construction of one's identity and self-perception	Stereotypes, social roles, expected behavior, cognitive biases	Beliefs, ideology, power, resource distribution, institutionalized structuring, macro factors
Are there intrinsic characteristics that define feminine and masculine identity in the tourism industry?	How have men and women internalized gender roles?	Does gender affect job opportunities, wages, working conditions in the tourism industry?
Which values and beliefs are involved in feminine and masculine identity when dealing with travel and leisure?	How is gender created through social interaction in tourism?	How does gender affect success?
How does gender influence self-concept or self-satisfaction from a leisure perspective?	How do gender roles influence individual behavior in the investigated tourist issue?	What is the relevance of gendered organization in the tourism industry?
What constrains does gender imply in individual tourism decisions or in the specific analyzed tourism issues?	Could you identify different behaviors in the interaction with others in the analyzed tourism issue?	What gendered stereotypes are established in the tourism industry? Do these stereotypes influence the different treatment of men and women in tourism?
Is gender identity linked with stages in life cycle?	How does the family define gender roles in tourism?	Does gender affect leisure activities offered by the tourism industry?
		Do socio-cultural factors (society patriarchal or matriarchal, age, family life cycle stage, education and self-concept) determine travel?

**Source:** Adapted and extended from [Segovia-Pérez et al. \(2019a, 2019b\)](#) and [Risman \(2004\)](#)

**Table 1.**  
Dimensions to consider in the definition of research objectives and hypotheses

be useful as interesting reference material for constructing goals and hypotheses for future research.

As for *the research methodologies and techniques for collecting information*, these must be consistent with the gender perspective, to avoid this perspective only being present in the theoretical review. Measurement instruments must include variables with gender explanatory potential (Eguiluz *et al.*, 2011). As part of increasing utilization of feminist theory, we also call for greater engagement with mixed methods approaches, which unites the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methods. Likewise, the information collection tools (questionnaires and survey checklists) must be gender-sensitive, use non-sexist language and allow, to the greatest extent possible the detection of the different realities of men and women; All this would help to avoid gender prejudice. For example, the responses to be provided by the “head of household” are not necessarily valid for all household members. Regarding the selection of the methodology, it is a very important question, which will be addressed in detail in the next section.

Regarding *data analysis*, in most research involving humans, data is routinely disaggregated by sex, but one must go further. It is vital to look for the factors that trigger the social structure built through gender that feed the differences between men and women (characteristics depending on the social role, attitudes, beliefs, productive/reproductive work, sexual identity, family role and life cycle) (Eguiluz *et al.*, 2011). Using samples with similar levels of participation between men and women, as far as possible, is one way of guaranteeing the greatest impact of the results. Regarding the analyzes, it is very important to specify the novelty that the inclusion of the gender perspective brings compared to an androcentric and positivist approach. Also, avoiding the dichotomic construction of sex (women or men) improves the inclusion levels of the implemented research instruments and provides a more diversified and inclusive spectrum.

Finally, regarding the *presentation of data*, gender should be included in publications. Specific dissemination actions (publications or events) can also be taken into account for conclusions regarding gender. Institutions and departments that focus on gender should be included in the dissemination target groups. Non-sexist language should be used in publications.

### 3.2 *Relevant methodologies and epistemological approaches*

Positivism is an approach to scientific knowledge that seeks generalization and allows researchers to generalize their results. It is based on “objectivity” and verifiability by which it is guaranteed that the investigation has been carried out without incurring any type of bias and that the results can be verifiable by anyone using the same analysis methods. To guarantee these two principles, the researcher must separate their personal values and experiences from the research process (Metso and Le Feuvre, 2006). The feminist rejection of positivism is based on the denial of the possibility of objective research results and the denial of the desirability of truly objective data collection techniques (Sprague and Zimmerman, 1989). As already seen, all knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is socially constructed, so feminism affirms that it is impossible to carry out an investigation that is totally free of subjective biases. According to Marchbank and Letherby (2014), feminist criticism of the traditional research process comes from: selection of sexist and elitist research objectives; lack of inclusion of female cases in investigations; exploitative relationships between the researcher and the researchee, without considering this type of relationship and the implications of the research on the researchee; lack of objectivity toward research groups that are mainly male and; use of quantitative methodologies,

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traditionally associated with male research methods, as opposed to qualitative ones, associated with female methods.

Epistemologically, from the critique of the universality of western positivist science, the proposals of feminist epistemologists have been plural and, in some points, opposed (Martínez *et al.*, 2014; Marchbank and Letherby, 2014). According to Blázquez Graf and Fernández Rius (2012), there are three theoretical approaches in feminist epistemology [1]. First, Standpoint feminism questions the fundamental assumptions of scientific positivism, its purported objectivity and neutrality. It criticizes quantitative methods and highlights the knowledge that comes from the experience of women, which allows them to have a different and privileged point of view. This privileged position has been criticized by feminist post-modernism, a new theoretical approach, which criticizes the idea that there is a single voice and vision for women; experiences differ between women, according to age, class, race, ethnicity and culture. This position creates significant difficulties from a research design and methodological point of view. Finally, Feminist Empiricism considers that it is possible to find a perspective from which to observe and generate knowledge, which can be impartial and rational.

According to Heimtun and Morgan (2012), feminist empiricism has been characterized as an approach where researchers simply “add women and stir,” with quantitative methods (Aitchison, 2005) unable to focus on knowledge, which fully accommodates women’s experiences.

Methodologically, there is a dual model of qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches, which are also deeply rooted in different epistemological positions, or equally, in the different conceptions of what is understood by knowledge and science and how we come to know things (Metso and Le Feuvre, 2006). In opposition to quantitative methodologies, qualitative methodologies commonly refer to the compilation and analysis of material that seeks to discover meaning and promote a complete and diverse understanding of the experiences of the research subjects (Yin, 2011; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). It focuses on language and observation. It consists of descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions and observed behavior; direct accounts of personal experiences, attitudes, beliefs and thoughts, complete passages of documents, correspondence, reports and historical cases (Babbie, 2011; Cea Azcona, 1997; Vallés, 1997).

Traditionally, qualitative methodology has been associated with feminist research, while quantitative methods are inscribed in conventional male designs. Epistemologically, feminist researchers have rejected the positivist quantitative approach in the study of reality for various reasons. On the one hand, as has already been seen, they consider that it is not possible to achieve fully objective knowledge and separate the object from the subject (researcher -researched subject). On the other, they consider that quantitative methodology is constructed in terms of testing theories and making predictions, an approach, which is not valid in the deep analysis of the socially constructed factors that the application of a gender perspective requires. Furthermore, they consider that it tends to reproduce the existing power relations, so they assume a process of control and manipulation of the subjects in the research project (Metso and Le Feuvre, 2006). On the contrary, they consider that the qualitative methodology is more empathetic, open and egalitarian (Risman, 1993) and is more appropriate when it is necessary to know the subjective and personal meanings of the subjects while giving voice to the most oppressed groups in society [2].

However, the debate about what “feminist methodology” should not be is based on a dichotomy about the preponderance and quality of each of the research methods when, in short, they are complementary methodologies. Metso and Le Feuvre (2006), Risman (1993) and Munar *et al.* (2017) consider that all approaches, both “quantitative” and “qualitative”

are socially constructed, from the moment the researcher determines the categories to be used to collect the data and interpret it. Therefore, the main thing is not so much the method used, but rather the selection of questions and variables (Eguiluz *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, research on gender in tourism should not focus only on a methodology or focus exclusively on subjective issues. The combination of both methodologies may be the best option to shed light on unexplored aspects (Heimtun and Morgan, 2012; Ariños *et al.*, 2011) or for comparison with other research.

#### 4. Conceptual model in tourism and gender: thematic areas of investigation

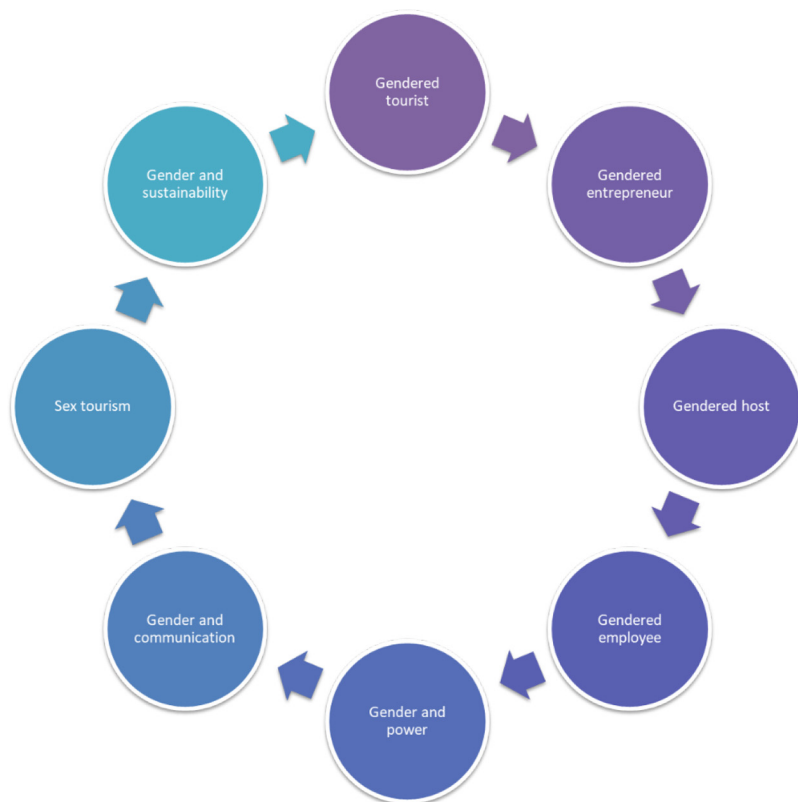
Leisure has become a means for personal development of women and men, and tourism activities stand out, in this sense, both for their variety and for their importance in today's society. Gender is a factor that globally influences very diverse and varied areas of tourism. These areas include the definition of leisure and tourism itself, the work environment, consumer and marketing analysis, technology analysis, development and sustainability, entrepreneurship and many more. Thus, expanding a gender gaze in tourism research permits discovering and revealing new scenarios. This knowledge can contribute to a greater understanding of reality, contributing to the construction of an almost non-existent theoretical and empirical body.

The main lines to develop are framed in two basic areas: Firstly, in the capacity of men and women to create and develop this economic and social activity in an innovative and sustainable way and secondly, in the differential needs as a tourist, of men and women when generating their leisure activity.

Thus, we are faced with questions about ethics in sex tourism, production inequalities, marketing and consumption of tourism and sexual enjoyment based on ideas about masculinity and femininity. In addition, tourism is an ideal vehicle to promote the richness of diversity, for example, through cultural tourism and justice in equal access to resources and opportunities for tourism providers and consumer-tourists (Swain, 2005). Therefore, applying a gender perspective in planning a tourist destination can make it more sustainable and socially responsible.

The conceptual model on the presence of women and men in the tourism sector and, therefore, the areas in which it is relevant to apply a gender perspective in tourism (Figure 2) is defined by the literature review and the reality of the tourist activity, namely, Gendered tourist; Gendered entrepreneur; Gendered employee; Gendered resident; Gender and Sustainability; Gendered power; Gendered Marketing and Communication and Sex tourism (Segovia-Pérez and Figueroa-Domecq, 2018).

In relation to the *Gendered tourist* perspective and in direct relation to *Gender and communication*, the needs and expectations of women or men when looking for information, making reservations, consuming tourist products and commenting on them can be gender specific. A review of the literature shows how many products are inevitably designed from a masculine perspective (Westwood *et al.*, 2000). There are ever more women who travel independently and more and more who are aware of their need for self-development. These means tourist destinations and tourist products need to consider, their different needs and expectations, as well as the need for security (Kotler and Lee, 2008). Furthermore, by developing numerous products based on the needs of women, products with a higher quality of design and service are being created that are also positive for men (Kotler and Lee, 2008; Pearce, 2005). New research opportunities arise in this sense: gender-specific tourism marketing (Kinnaird and Hall, 1994); the evaluation of their specific motivations and expectations (Pearce, 2005), the technological gap and their influence on the organization of



Source: The Authors

**Figure 2.** Conceptual model of tourism and the application of a gender perspective

tourist trips (Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2010; Kelan, 2007) and the role of women in the organization of travel (Pearce, 2005).

A fundamental aspect in the general work environment is the situation of widespread discrimination against women in terms of access to certain positions of power and the gender pay gap. From a *Gendered employee* perspective, this is true in the tourism sector, as well as in the economy and society in general. The equal presence of women favors the economic development of all subsectors that depend on tourism at all levels, and their role is essential to build strong, stable and fair economies (Sinclair, 1997). However, associated with female employment, these problems often derive from situations of labor discrimination, both in the so-called Glass Ceiling, Horizontal Segmentation, Salary Gap (Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2014, Santero-Sanchez *et al.*, 2015) and Technological Gap (Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2019; Segovia-Pérez *et al.*, 2012). Directly related to this area is the *Gendered entrepreneur*. As consistently identified in several EU policies (e.g. Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, COSME, EU Youth Strategy 2010–2018), *entrepreneurship* is fundamental to economic development. Strengthening this will require maximizing the potential pool of successful entrepreneurs, of all ages, especially addressing the persistent under-representation of *women* (Markussen and Røed, 2017; Bönnte and Piegeler, 2013). *Tourism* is advocated as an accessible

entrepreneurship gateway for women because of the predominance of small firms and relatively low entry barriers; but, even so, the proportion of women entrepreneurs remains well below equality (Ramos-Rodriguez *et al.*, 2012). According to De la Fuente *et al.* (2014), the studies carried out on the creation of companies, both internationally and nationally, coincide in pointing out that women have less participation in self-employment, despite the fact that it has increased significantly in recent years (Brush *et al.*, 2009 and Álvarez Llorente and Otero Giraldez, 2006). Likewise, women promote and boost entrepreneurship, especially in the case of Small and Medium Enterprises, and in the development of rural areas (Cánoves *et al.*, 2004). Nor should it be forgotten that in many cases women occupy a role in tourism that assimilates the traditional role of the housewife and even reinforces it, not challenging stereotypes (Cassel and Pettersson, 2015; Vandegrift, 2008).

Regarding *Gendered power*, tourism as an economic and social system is based on the relationships between people (businessmen, clients, residents and managers), which, in turn, are affected by gender. Gender is the basis of social relations in the distribution of power in the home, the community and social classes; it is expressed in motivations, desires, traditions and perceptions and it is, therefore, a factor of tourist development and underdevelopment (Swain, 1995). Tourism activities and processes are built from societies where gender is the basis of everything. Therefore, power's distribution, labor division, the construction of the tourist landscape (natural, historical, cultural or artistic), the social perception of the "other," and the realities of the experiences of tourists and residents are impossible to analyze and evaluate without taking into account the importance of gender in the construction of each and every one of these variables (Kinnaird and Hall, 1994, 1996). Nor should the importance of tourism be forgotten in terms of empowering women (Boley *et al.*, 2017).

A fundamental element in any tourist destination is the residents. From a *Gendered host* point of view, tourism impacts residents, just as residents impact the type of tourism that develops. The impact of tourism can be positive or negative, and affects the form in a different way, due to the differentiated role of women and men in society (Haralambopoulos and Pizam, 1996; Boley *et al.*, 2017). Regarding the impact of tourism, the relationship between *gender and sustainability* is clear, as confirmed by the fact that one of the 17 SDGs in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the UN is gender equality (SDG 5). This is a fact supported by extensive literature (Moreno Alarcón and Cole, 2019; Bidegain Ponte and Enriquez, 2016) and various international organizations (UN, ILO and UNWTO). Still, research in this area is limited and has not been translated into concrete policies (Moreno Alarcón and Cole, 2019), when gender is a critical event in the development of sustainable tourism (Lee-Gosselin *et al.*, 2013).

Finally, a tragic and widespread reality is the association of tourism and sex, through sexual tourism (**sex tourism**). Sex tourism aims at tourism with the goal of having sex. Although those that seek this kind of tourism may be men or women, they are, for the most part, men. In addition, this sex tourism has a very negative impact on women and girls who are included within these networks. It is an important area of research, with important ramifications (Kempadoo and Ghuma, 2017; Jacobs, 2016; Vandegrift, 2008).

## 5. Conclusions

The implementation of a gender perspective in tourism is presented as a great opportunity for both established and novice academic researchers. This area of research has obtained increasing interest at international and national levels, as evidenced by the drive made by international organizations such as UN and UNWTO. However, many gaps to be addressed

remain, so it is necessary to expand and deepen tourism research with a true gender perspective.

Addressing the gender dimension in tourism research implies considering gender as a key analytical and explanatory variable in the process of social construction of any tourist activity. Research with a gender perspective must analytically include those social factors that influence the differences between men and women, which could explain different behavior and opportunities in tourism. The implementation of feminist theories is key.

In this way, throughout the research process, gender must be present in all its phases: from the conception of the idea and the proposal of the objectives, to the choice of methodology, analysis and interpretation of the results and their publication

To date, the application of a gender perspective in the evaluation of tourism has shown notable differences in all areas (employment, entrepreneurship and consumption) between men and women, as a result of social roles and the social construction of gender. For this reason, it is essential to apply a gender perspective in tourism research that helps to discern, understand and propose differences and, where appropriate, reduce inequality.

However, the literature on the relationship between tourism and gender is extensive internationally and various authors refer to important lines of research to be developed. The designed conceptual model proposes the following areas of research, namely, Gendered tourist; Gendered entrepreneur; Gendered employee; Gendered resident; Gender and Sustainability; Gendered power; Gendered Marketing and Communication and; Sex tourism.

Gender approach should be present in tourism research to shed additional light on an understanding of sector complex reality.

## Notes

1. Epistemology is a discipline that studies how scientific knowledge is generated and validated. Its function is to analyze the precepts that are used to justify the scientific data, considering the social, psychological and even historical factors that come into play. In this sense, we can establish even more clearly that the epistemology of what is being dealt with is to approach philosophy and knowledge through the answer to various vital questions such as the following: What is knowledge? How do we humans carry out reasoning? And how do we verify that what we have understood is true?
2. For an in-depth analysis of this topic and its relationship with feminist movements, it is advisable to read.

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### Corresponding author

Cristina Figueroa-Domecq can be contacted at: [cristina.figueroa@urjc.es](mailto:cristina.figueroa@urjc.es)