

Empirical research on tourism businesses operated by women entrepreneurs in Portugal and Türkiye

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Abstract | This study aims to identify the social and economic contributions of women-owned tourism enterprises to the areas in which they operate, within the framework of sustainable entrepreneurship, and to reveal the nature of their innovative practices. More specifically, this study will highlight the essential role of women in the promotion of tourism and hospitality in Türkiye and Portugal. A purposive sampling method was used to collect data from tourism enterprises created and managed by Turkish women's initiatives. Using the interview technique, one of the qualitative research methods, we seek answers to the following research questions: I) What social and economic efforts are women making through sustainable entrepreneurship in the rural areas of Amasya and Alto Minho? II) What are the innovative practices of women in their businesses? III) How do women manage to reconcile their family life with being hosts in accommodation units? In the specific case of Portugal, a comparison was made using secondary data. Therefore, this research is based on the collection of data from semi-structured interviews with 13 Turkish women entrepreneurs, hosts of rural endeavors. In Portugal, the data comes from ten unstructured interviews with women owners of Historic Housing Tourism (HHT) units. The sample collected in this study, although small, provides a perspective on the role of women in two culturally different societies.

Keywords | Women, Entrepreneurship, Türkiye, Portugal, Rural Tourism

Resumo | Este estudo tem como objetivo identificar as contribuições sociais e económicas das empresas turísticas detidas por mulheres para as áreas em que estão inseridas, no âmbito do empreendedorismo sustentável, e dar a conhecer a natureza das suas práticas inovadoras. Mais concretamente, este estudo irá destacar o papel essencial das mulheres na dinamização de empresas turísticas na Turquia e em Portugal. Foi utilizado um método de amostragem intencional para recolher dados de empresas turísticas criadas e geridas por iniciativa de mulheres turcas. Utilizando a técnica da entrevista, um dos métodos de investigação qualitativa, procuram-se respostas para as seguintes questões de investigação I) Que tipo de esforços sociais e económicos estão as mulheres a fazer nas zonas rurais de Amasya e Alto Minho, através do empreendedorismo sustentável? II) Quais são as práticas inovadoras das mulheres nas suas empresas? III) Como é que as mulheres conseguem conciliar a sua vida familiar com o facto de serem anfitriãs em unidades de alojamento?

No caso específico de Portugal, empreendeu-se um estudo comparativo utilizando dados secundários. Assim esta investigação baseia-se na recolha de dados a partir de entrevistas semiestruturadas a 13 mulheres empreendedoras turcas. Em Portugal, os dados resultam de uma dezena de entrevistas não estruturadas a mulheres proprietárias de unidades de Turismo de Habitação. A amostra recolhida neste estudo, apesar de reduzida, fornece uma perspetiva sobre o papel das mulheres em duas sociedades culturalmente diferentes.

Palavras-chave | Mulheres, Empreendedorismo, Turquia, Portugal, Rural Tourism

1. Introduction

Rural areas are generally characterised by the presence of traditional agricultural and forestry activities, or even extractive activities (Diniz & Gerry, 2009), where there is usually no place for the processing of natural resources. This situation excludes the emergence of new activities in rural areas of a post-industrial nature, such as tourism. With regard to traditional social structures and values, there is a widespread perception among urban dwellers that rural areas are likely to retain those peculiarities that are absent in contemporary urban societies (Jepson & Sharpley, 2015). These traditional social structures and values are based on a sense of community, the prevalence of local rather than cosmopolitan cultures, and a slower, more 'natural' way of living in communion with nature, less materialistic and more holistic (Lane, 1994 *apud* Roberts & Hall, 2001).

Nowadays, there are tourist destinations that have a high tourism potential because they have natural, scenic, and cultural resources. Natural resources include mountains, plains, coastlines, lakes, rivers, caves, places to observe flora and fauna, national parks and flora and fauna reserves, among many others (Crespi & Planells, 2011; López Olivares, 2014). On the other hand, the concept of rural has also changed. For example, according to Marzo-Navarro (2017), the concept of rural encompasses the areas and regions where different activities take place, including natural and cultivated spaces, settlements, villages, small towns, as well as industrialised rural areas. In any case, although the primary sector plays an important role in the economy of European countries, its relevance is decreasing (Fagioli, Diotallevi & Ciani, 2014).

In fact, the progressive decline of agricultural activity has led to the emergence of the rural service sector, which has accelerated the diversification of rural economies. This led to the emergence of 'pluriactivity' in the countryside, which consisted of seeing tourism and leisure activities as an additional source of income for rural landowners (Sharpley & Sharpley, 1997; Braga & Sousa, 2021; Lima, 1990). Rural tourism has therefore been seen as a way to "revitalise disadvantaged areas" (Perales, 2002 *apud* Águas & Antunes, 2017).

In reality, rural areas have important comparative advantages that are pull factors for visitors (Marujo, 2015; Martinez-Roget, Tavares Moutela & Estevez Núñez, 2015), such as the landscape,

waterways, vernacular and rural architecture, as well as traditions and customs and the tacit knowledge acquired by their communities (Silva, Lima & Chamusca, 2010).

The changes that have taken place in the countryside have been accompanied by the involvement of women in the rural world, which has contributed to the conservation and refunctionalisation of heritage (Braga, 2016), the revival of crafts and the preservation of old production methods (Tirado-Ballesteros & Hernández-Hernández, 2018). Pato (2016) also highlights the importance of women in "boosting the tourism business" (p. 627). According to Hall (2004), the challenge of empowering women in rural areas faces two obstacles: the legacy of subordination and the dominance of men in rural areas. Indeed, according to the same author, it is controversial whether the multifunctionality of the countryside and the multiple incomes it generates lead to the replication of roles traditionally associated with women, particularly domestic work.

Nevertheless, McGehee, Knollenber & Komorowski (2015) believe that rural tourism can provide new opportunities for women. For its part, the WTO (2004) states that sustainable rural tourism, in addition to creating more jobs, preserving the landscape, promoting handicraft activities, and protecting the environment, also contributes to enhancing the role of women in their communities. This study aims to identify the social and economic contributions of women-owned tourism enterprises to the rural areas in which they are located, within the framework of sustainable entrepreneurship, and the nature of their innovative practices.

To this end, a purposive sampling method was used to collect data from tourism enterprises established and run by women's initiatives. Using the interview technique, one of the qualitative research methods, answers were sought to the following research questions: I) What kind of social and economic efforts are women making in the rural areas of Amasya in Türkiye and Alto Minho in Portugal through sustainable entrepreneurship? II) What are the innovative practices of women in their enterprises? III) How do women manage to reconcile their family life with being hosts in accommodation units? This research will collect data from semi-structured interviews with 13 women entrepreneurs in Türkiye, and 10 hosts of HHT tourism units in Portugal.

The paper is divided into six sections. In addition to this introduction, a characterisation of the two units of analysis is carried out from a geographical and socio-anthropological point of view. Next, the role of women as entrepreneurs of rural tourism establishments and Historic Housing Tourism units (Braga & Silva, 2022) in both Türkiye and Portugal is analysed. The methodology used in this study and the results of the analysis of the primary and secondary data collected are presented in the following sections. The work finds its epilogue in the sixth section, in which the results obtained with the concepts present in the literature are intercepted, as well as the limitations and future axes of investigation are analysed.

2. The two geographical units analysed: Amasya and Alto Minho

Amasya, which has the title of "City of Princes", is located in the central part of the Black Sea Region, but since it does not have a coastline, it exhibits the characteristics of the Central Anatolia region in terms of climate and life culture. World-famous traveler and geography writer Strabon was born in Amasya (see fig. 1). Pottery remains and architectural traces found in mounds in Amasya show that the history of the city dates back to the Neolithic and Chalcolithic ages. Amasya, whose history dates back to ancient times, has hosted many civilizations over the centuries. Amasya, located at a point where the main branches of the Yeşilirmak River and the mountains meet, is a city with a very high potential in terms of tourism with its history, culture and natural beauties (Amasya İl Kültür ve Turizm Müdürlüğü, 2024a).



Figure 1 | Amasya in Türkiye

Source: Wikipedia Commons, 2011

Amasya has very rich resources in terms of cultural tourism with its historical and cultural museums, mosques, madrassas and tombs, and in terms of nature-based tourism types with its natural beauties. In general, Amasya's tourism activities; cultural tourism, thermal tourism, mountain and nature walks, bicycle tourism, camping and caravan tourism, sport angling, bird watching, plant inspection and wildlife (Amasya İl Kültür ve Turizm Müdürlüğü, 2024b).

Amasya has 7 districts. These districts are: Center, Göynücek, Gümüşhacıköy, Hamamözü, Merzifon, Suluova and Taşova. According to the results of the address-based population registration system dated December 31, 2023, the total population of Amasya province is 339,529 and 171,239 of this population are women. The majority of the population lives in the center of Amasya (Amasya Valiliği, 2024).

As far as the Alto Minho is concerned, although this region has deep roots in Portuguese history, it currently corresponds to an intermunicipal community (CIM) and is a level III statistical territorial unit (NUT III). The Alto Minho CIM includes the following municipalities Arcos de Valdevez, Caminha,

Melgaço, Monção, Paredes de Coura, Ponte da Barca, Ponte de Lima, Valença, Viana do Castelo and Vila Nova de Cerveira (CIM Alto Minho, 2024).

From a geographical point of view, Alto Minho (see fig. 2) is located in the north-west of Portugal and has a population of around 250,000 spread over an area of 2210 km². It borders the Spanish region of Galicia to the north, the district of Braga to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the west (Alto Minho, 2024). The climate of the region is mild, with low temperatures ranging from 7.5° C to 15° C. This area also has one of the highest rainfall rates in Europe. A significant part of Portugal's only National Park, the Peneda-Gerês National Park, is located here. The region is also crossed by one of the most important pilgrimage routes in Europe, the Portuguese Way of St. James of Compostela, namely the Coastal Route and the Central Route (Caminho Português de Santiago, 2017-2024).

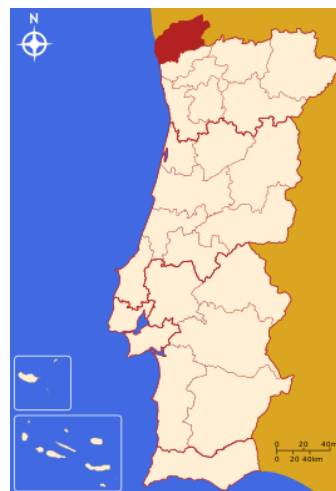


Figure 2 | Alto Minho Intermunicipal Community (NUTS3)

Source: Wikipedia Commons, 2016

The Minho identity was legally recognised in the Administrative Code of 1936 (Claudino, 2006). This reflects the existence of a series of stereotypes about this territorial unit - which includes Baixo Minho (Braga district) and Alto Minho (Viana do Castelo district) - dating back to the 19th century (Braga, 2007). Thus, writers such as Sant'Anna Dionísio (Braga, 2007) used the epithet 'garden' to describe this province. Others, such as Almeida Garrett and Alexandre Herculano, saw this province as the cradle of Portuguese nationality (Braga, 2007). It is to the latter historian that we owe the name *Alto Minho*. This term was later appropriated and used by intellectuals and politicians from Viana do Castelo to support regionalist claims (Medeiros, 2004).

3. Women entrepreneurship in rural tourism in Portugal and Türkiye

In the literature, it can be seen that there are studies on women entrepreneurs in the field of rural tourism in Türkiye. When these studies are evaluated, it is seen that rural tourism offers opportunities and significant contributions to women entrepreneurship (Fidan & Nam, 2012; Boyacıoğlu, 2014; Demir & Boz, 2017). Fidan & Nam (2012) aimed to reveal the place and effectiveness of women in rural tourism in Taraklı, the tourist district of Sakarya. According to the results of the research, they concluded that women have a significant contribution to the development of rural tourism in Taraklı, and since women are the locomotive of the rural region, they have a power that maintains the historical, touristic, and local traditions of the region they live in. According to the Boyacıoğlu (2014) research, which aims to determine rural tourism-focused women entrepreneurship on the basis of Edirne province, it has been determined that women entrepreneurs in Edirne make significant contributions to the production of local/regional products, especially rural tourism-focused. In addition, it was concluded that the existence of rural tourism-oriented women's entrepreneurship in Edirne supports the socio-economic development of women.

Demir & Boz (2017) evaluated rural tourism studies in Cumalıkızık village of Yıldırım district of Bursa province, in terms of rural development, and stated that rural tourism offers opportunities especially to women entrepreneurship. According to the results of Aylan, Sarı Gök & Şalvarcı (2019) investigated the role of the tourism sector and women's entrepreneurship activities in reducing rural poverty, women's entrepreneurship activities carried out in the tourism sector have a wide range of activities, including home pensions, food and beverage businesses, local products, souvenir stalls and other tourism products. According to the results of Yıldırım, Taroğlu & Kılıç (2020) research on women entrepreneurship in tourism in Türkiye, that women's entrepreneurship in the tourism sector is focused on rural tourism. Even though there are women's tourism initiatives that can be considered great examples in Türkiye, women experience some difficulties in the process of starting entrepreneurship in the field of tourism and after the initiative is implemented. They stated that one of the biggest problems experienced by women entrepreneurs in tourism is that tourism is seasonal.

For Portugal as a whole, the importance of female hosts in rural tourism has already been highlighted by Silva (2009), who pointed out that 50% of hosts in this type of establishment are women. In fact, this predominance of women on farms dates back to 1968, as they were already in the majority in the *Inquérito das Explorações Agrícolas* (Agricultural Holdings Survey) (Valadas, 2011). Cavaco (1999, p. 299) also refers to the role of women in the promotion of rural tourism in the following terms:

Women have always played an important role in the running of rural tourism establishments, in welcoming tourists, if not in management and institutional contacts, especially when they are housewives. Their level of education, training and culture makes it easier for them to take on these tasks and responsibilities

and helps them to attract customers who are very demanding in terms of treatment and conviviality (...). It also compensates for the fact that they receive a significant income, which gives them a degree of personal independence, especially in the case of female domestic workers, and which helps to cover not only the costs of maintaining the buildings and equipment, but also the salaries of full-time employees throughout the year, as has become customary in these socio-economic groups and a condition of their status, even with relatively low occupancy rates and marked seasonality: caretakers, farm workers, cooks, domestic workers, drivers...

If we analyse tourism from a general perspective, we see that in Portugal in 2022, according to INE data, 56.4% of the staff working in accommodation units were women (INE, 2023).

4. Methods

This study used purposive sampling in the case of Türkiye, where participants were selected from a population that was willing to participate in the study (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008). Participants were selected on the basis of their knowledge and experience of hospitality in rural tourism centres. In the case of Türkiye, the data came from qualitative interviews that sought to answer the following questions I) What kind of social and economic efforts are women making in the rural areas of Amasya in Türkiye, and Alto Minho in Portugal through sustainable entrepreneurship? II) What are the innovative practices of women in their enterprises? III) How do women manage to reconcile their family life with being hosts in accommodation units?

In the Portuguese case, the documentation consulted can be considered as secondary data. In fact, it was not collected for the purposes of this study (Finn, Elliott-White & Walton, 2000; Bryman, 2012; Braga, 2016). Hakim (*apud* Finn, Elliott-White & Walton, 2000, p. 41) considers secondary data to be 'any further analysis of an existing dataset that presents interpretations, conclusions or findings that are additional to, or different from, those presented in the first report on the inquiry as a whole and its main findings'. This comparative study therefore contrasts the findings of a recent study conducted in Türkiye with interviews collected as part of a doctoral research project (Braga, 2016). The interviews conducted in the latter work followed the dictates of theoretical sampling, which is rooted in grounded theory. Therefore, 10 of the 53 interviews were selected, as they were with female entrepreneurs who own accommodation tourism establishments in the Alto Minho region.

The present research is therefore a case study based on an international comparison of women entrepreneurs in tourism accommodation units, most of which are located in rural areas. The case study can combine quantitative and qualitative data, but in this case only interview data is used. The use of qualitative interviews was intended to provide an in-depth understanding of women's behaviour in rural tourism and Historic Housing Tourism (Braga & Silva, 2022). Semi-structured interviews (for the Turkish case) and unstructured interviews (for the Portuguese case) were the

data collection tools used. In both cases, the interviews were conducted according to an interview script (Bernard, 2018). Finn, Elliott-White & Walton (2000) explicitly refer to the potential of secondary data for international comparisons. Bryman (2012) also highlights the potential of secondary data to conduct cross-cultural research, as long as the data are comparable.

5. Findings

This study will highlight the essential role of women in the dynamisation of tourist accommodation in both Türkiye and Portugal. The rural world is typically characterised by the predominance of part-time farming. In this context, agriculture acts as a support for other sources of income, such as wages earned from part-time work outside the farm (Hespanha, 1994). Small-scale farming is therefore prevalent as a supplement to the farmer's income. Women who host in country houses see tourism as a source of multiple income – is the basis for the multifunctionality of rural areas (López Olivares, 2014). Following Shumpeter (cited in Walmsley, 2019), this research will also analyse the innovations implemented by women entrepreneurs in the following areas: 1) technological innovation; 2) marketing innovation; 3) opening up the enterprise to new markets; 4) new materials, new resources and new inputs; 5) process innovation.

On 01-05 April 2024, 13 women entrepreneurs in Amasya were interviewed face-to-face and data was collected. These tourism businesses run by women entrepreneurs mainly consist of food and beverage businesses. The interviews revealed that the number of women entrepreneurs has increased in recent years.

In general, women entrepreneurs stated that they experienced the fear of failure before starting business life, but as they became successful in business life, their self-confidence and motivation increased. The tourism industry requires labour-intensive and devoted work due to its unique characteristics, especially service quality and customer satisfaction.

Women entrepreneurs who are aware of this situation stated that they had difficulties at first due to the nature of the tourism industry, but over time, as they achieved success in business life, their motivation and desire to work increased, and that they overcame difficulties when they achieved balance between business life and family life, made good plans and good time management. They also said that the joy of working, earning their own money and achieving something increased their determination and desire to work. They said that it was particularly important for them to be supported by their family members and to be valued by their environment. The results verbalised by the Turkish respondents are summarised in the table 1:

Table 1 | The main issues raised by the Turkish women interviewed in the survey were

Questions	Key issues raised by those surveyed
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<p><i>What social and economic efforts are women making through sustainable entrepreneurship in the rural areas of Amasya in Türkiye?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing training to women by experts in the fields of production, marketing, and entrepreneurship. • Providing employment opportunities to the people of the region and especially supporting women's employment. • Consciousness and awareness activities regarding women's work and success in business life (experience sharing, training, etc.). • Cooperating with other tourism stakeholders in the region, carrying out projects and supporting their activities. • Direct purchase of products from local producers. • Supporting women's cooperatives and women who produce their own products at home and purchasing the products they produce. • Carrying out studies within the scope of recognition and visibility of the region. • Providing support to disadvantaged people and disabled people. • Helping sick and homeless people. • Supporting the educational life of children without families. • Giving leftover food from the business to stray animals and shelters. • Preferring natural and healthy products in the business and raising awareness among people about this issue. • Using natural cleaning products in businesses and minimizing the damage to the environment. • Preferring environmentally friendly sustainable products and services. • Ensuring water savings. • Giving importance to recycling, controlling waste and garbage. • Using renewable energy sources.
<p><i>What are the innovative practices of women in their businesses?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making use of technology (using technological tools and devices to produce more products, save time and be less costly). • Giving importance to renewable energy consumption and utilizing sustainable technological products. • Giving importance to recycling and separating waste according to type. • Avoiding waste (e.g. converting leftover material into another product and obtaining another product). • Using environmentally friendly natural products and services. • Chemical management.
<p><i>How do women manage to reconcile their family life with their work as hosts in accommodation units / tourism businesses?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving balance between work and family life. • Increased work distribution, task sharing, solidarity, and unity among family members. • The moral support of the family, especially against difficulties in business life, is very important. • Good planning between work and family life. • Good time management.

Source: Own Elaboration

In the Portuguese case, the interviews used here were conducted between 2012 and 2013. In one of them, a co-owner of a house in Alto Minho explicitly states that his wife was the driving force behind the implementation of Historic Housing Tourism (HHT) in the manor house:

My wife quit her job in a company to take on the project because she realised she would enjoy it. We lived in England for three years and my wife got into the habit of having friends over. In England we had to renovate an old house. We wanted to restore an old house. My wife liked to receive friends (Braga, 2016, p. 717).

In this case, the couple adopted a benchmarking strategy in the early stages of implementing the business: 'we tried to do the same or better in the good things and good in the bad things, because we saw bad things in HHT' (idem). The strategy was to meet the needs of a demanding segment. The co-owner also expressed her desire to innovate when it came to formulating the accommodation offer, not wanting to confine the house to the legal framework of a HHT establishment, which it was, but wanting to transform it into a boutique hotel.

Another guesthouse promoter, the HHT owner's sister-in-law, had 20 years' experience in the hotel industry in Brazil before taking on this challenge. The dedication required to be a host is one of the themes she addressed:

To be prepared for all that, to welcome the family, to like them and to be available for the time they come if the plane is delayed. Sometimes the plane is delayed and this isn't a hotel. I'm just one person and sometimes I take turns with my husband. I have to be here 24 hours a day. Then there's the bureaucracy of the office (Braga, 2016, p. 785).

Not all the promoters of residential tourism units own the manor houses. An example of this is the loan agreement between the tourism director of a farm in Alto Minho and the owner. A defining characteristic of HHT is the method of hospitality, which this professional emphasises: "We try to personalise. We try to do things in a familiar way. One of the things people like is personalised service. Welcoming them as if they were family' (Braga, 2016, p. 802).

HHT houses are centuries-old constructions, so their transmission may take the tacit or unacknowledged form of *morgadio*, or favour the first-born to the detriment of the second-born. It would be important to know whether the strategies for passing on the property are fair in terms of the gender of the descendants. Another issue is the high maintenance costs, which make the business unattractive, as one HHT promoter put it:

There are many families where the house still goes to the eldest son. In our case, my mother's inclination is for it to go to the family. And we're wondering how we're going to maintain it. There are leaks everywhere. In my case, since I don't have children, am I going to buy [the house] and then leave it to my siblings? (Braga, 2016, p. 818).

Another aspect valued by HHT promoters is the availability of home-grown products: "I would have to offer (...) products from the farm and other products. I offer homemade jams to holidaymakers. I could do other kinds of plantations. Maybe put a restaurant here' (Braga, 2016, p. 818). In fact, investing in a circular economy appears to be a cost-effective option with comparative advantages over mass-market hotel accommodation.

HHT, as a strategy for the restoration of manor houses, was launched thanks to the entrepreneurial efforts of a woman, Maria Laura Achemann, an employee of the General Directorate of Tourism, who in the 1970s, as one of the owners of a guest house of this type points out: "was the one who

encouraged people to open their houses to tourism. They started with half a dozen in 10 years and grew to double that number in 20 years' (Braga, 2016, p. 847).

In relation to the establishment of partnerships, another owner mentioned another innovative practice:

We're in the city centre, where there are no parking spaces. There has to be a protocol with these places. I think it's important for them to realise that we don't just have to live with the problem, we have to find a solution. We may have to work around it (...) We have a partnership with the farm and we want to have partnerships for tourist routes. We have guests who want to go boating or horse riding. We offer the activity, but we also have to develop partnerships (Braga, 2016, p. 855).

The activity of hosting in these houses requires sacrifices on the part of the women in terms of reconciling their private lives with their lives as hosts of these accommodation units: 'It's a family heirloom that I have to keep, for which I have maintained it and in which I have made my life. With many good things and sacrifices. I never go away because I have to be there in the summer. I don't take my children to the beach. The family meetings are held there' (Braga, 2016, p. 857). Family life and professional activity require a spatial separation in the mother house, between areas for tourism and areas for family life, as one of the HHT owners points out:

We live in the right wing and the guests are in the left wing. The guests aren't in this room unless they want to talk to us. We like foreigners better; they live more independently. It's not the same with the Portuguese, they're more tiring. We have a bar downstairs and a room where they are (Braga, 2016, p.881).

Strong seasonality is one of the problems facing HHT units. In this context, one hostess highlighted the strategies she has adopted to deal with this constraint: 'The houses are a cancerous legacy. In the summer it's a pleasant experience, you live the old-fashioned way. But in October it's much more difficult. Not everything is meat, not everything is bones (...) We offer programmes that could be interesting in winter, show cooking, cooking workshops...' (Braga, 2016, p. 891).

One of the problems commonly attributed to HHT is that, despite the EU funding it has received, this activity has not created the number of jobs that might have been expected (Silva, 2005/2006), with the domestic activity of those already employed in the house often being supplemented by the activity of welcoming tourists. One of the interviewees mentioned this trend: 'I didn't work for a whole month and people weren't able to hire a full-time maid because it was seasonal' (Braga, 2016, p. 896).

6. Final remarks

Women have played an important role in all societies since the dawn of time. Today, women are very successful in business and hold important positions. Particularly in developing destinations and rural areas, women entrepreneurs set an example and contribute to society in social and economic terms. In addition, given the developments and changes in technology and information technology, it is predicted that businesses that do not keep pace with innovation and are only profit-oriented will not be successful in the long term. In this context, companies that provide social, environmental, and economic benefits to society and follow innovation may be more successful.

This comparative study has highlighted some of the constraints to female entrepreneurship in the two countries (Türkiye and Portugal), as well as the role that women have played in the development of tourism in rural areas. These results are in line with the specialised literature on the subject. It highlights the contribution of female entrepreneurship to the creation of local products, but also the difficulties faced by women in setting up a business in the tourism sector, which is a highly seasonal activity. This article is also consistent with the literature in highlighting the inability of many women-owned tourism enterprises to employ full-time staff throughout the year. Another aspect highlighted by the interviewees was the difficulty they experienced in achieving the necessary balance between developing the tourism business and devoting themselves to family life.

From the testimonies collected, we also get the impression that women's entrepreneurship should be based on working with local stakeholders to create partnerships that can add value to the products they sell. Other types of necessary synergies should be implemented in order to enhance the products of local farms themselves, thus differentiating the offer of accommodation units from mass accommodation. On the other hand, the adoption of a modern concept of hospitality should be able to introduce new technologies and new products and services in the accommodation offer developed by women entrepreneurs in both countries.

The sample collected in this study, although small, provides an insight into the role of women in two culturally different societies. Moreover, the regions studied are not homogeneous in terms of their geography and the cultural references of the people they serve. Nevertheless, this study highlights the challenges faced by women in a context of globalisation that favours the expansion of tourism in both regions.

Another limitation of this study is that the secondary data used for the Portuguese case was collected over a decade ago. However, given our knowledge of the problems associated with HHT, we believe that the testimonies presented here are still relevant.

It would be important for future research to deepen this comparative study by updating the data for the Portuguese case and collecting specific data for the research questions listed.

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