

# Gender equality measures in tourism: Organisational awareness and strategies

Medidas de promoção da **igualdade de género** no turismo:  
**Consciencialização e estratégias** organizacionais

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**Abstract** | In spite of the high predominance of women working within tourism organisations, numerous factors keep on affecting women's career advancement and strong inequalities in the workplace persist. Drawing on recent research conducted in Portugal on a nation-wide scale, this study uses quantitative and qualitative analysis to investigate the awareness of gender equality within tourism organisations and the strategies these organisations employ in order to reduce gendered inequalities. An online survey and focus groups were conducted with leaders in the Portuguese tourism industry, in 2013 and 2014.

In line with gender 'invisibility' theories, results indicate that there is some confusion regarding distinguishing gender-based discrimination at work among tourism leaders. Hence, organisational measures that are believed to endow female employees with more flexibility at work are seen to contribute to the perpetuation of stereotyped gender roles related to domestic and family duties. Furthermore, we find that SMEs, which largely dominate the tourism sector, have particular problems in implementing gender equality measures. Gaining a deeper understanding of the multiple and context-specific truths underlying the available opportunities to men and women in the different levels of the career ladder, is one of this paper's aims. Policymakers aiming to promote productivity and economic efficiency through increased gender equality at work, can be informed through the findings.

**Keywords** | Gender equality, gender awareness, tourism labour, tourism managers, Portugal.

**Resumo** | Apesar da presença predominante de mulheres a trabalhar no setor do turismo, inúmeros fatores continuam a condicionar a sua progressão profissional e persistem ainda fortes desigualdades no mercado de trabalho. Tendo por

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base um recente projeto de investigação realizado em Portugal, à escala nacional, este estudo conjuga métodos de análise quantitativa e qualitativa para explorar os níveis de consciência das empresas e organizações do setor do turismo acerca das questões de género, bem como as estratégias organizacionais que foram implementadas com vista à redução de desigualdades no trabalho. Para tal, entre 2013 e 2014, foi disseminado um questionário *online* e foram organizados vários *focus groups*, direcionados para empresários, líderes e gestores de várias áreas de negócio do setor do turismo em Portugal. Em conformidade com o fenómeno da 'invisibilidade' de que as questões de género frequentemente se revestem, os resultados indicam que ainda prevalece uma certa dúvida e confusão na mente dos gestores de empresas do setor turístico, quando se trata de efetivamente identificarem situações de discriminação de género no local de trabalho. Como tal, medidas institucionais, que se crê terem a capacidade de dotar as trabalhadoras com maior flexibilidade no trabalho, acabam por contribuir para a perpetuação de papéis estereotipados de género relacionadas com tarefas domésticas e familiares. Ademais, verificou-se que as pequenas e médias empresas, que amplamente dominam o setor do turismo, têm problemas específicos na definição e implementação de medidas de igualdade de género. Um dos objetivos deste artigo reside, portanto, em contribuir para uma compreensão mais profunda das múltiplas verdades que, em cada contexto específico, estão implícitas nas oportunidades que são oferecidas a homens e mulheres em diferentes fases das suas carreiras. As conclusões deste estudo revestem-se de particular relevância para decisores políticos, reguladores e supervisores que procurem estimular a produtividade e a eficiência económica através da promoção da igualdade no mercado de trabalho.

**Palavras-chave** | Igualdade de género, consciencialização e sensibilização para as questões de género, emprego em turismo, gestores e líderes, Portugal.

## 1. Gender roles in the tourism sector

Creating gender analyses of tourism processes is essential for a more holistic representation of today's reality (Ferguson & Alarcón, 2014). This is because gender roles and relations silently order social dynamics, hence invisibly influencing economic structures. The performance of stereotypical gender roles is particularly evident within tourism. Tourism is a highly gendered area with strong horizontal segregation (Baum, 2013) of occupations (e.g. women are chambermaids, men are bus drivers), a prevalence of men in top-level management positions and the use of sexualised images of young, attractive women to advertise holiday destinations (Jordan, 1997).

Not surprisingly, tourism is one of the sectors with the largest pay-gap, with women earning on average 26.3% less than men in Portugal in 2011 (Carvalho, Costa, Lykke, & Torres, 2014). Like many of the countries in Southern Europe, Portugal has a dominant patriarchal identity with stereotypical masculine and feminine gender roles being com-

mon practice (Costa, Carvalho, & Breda, 2011). At the same time, tourism is an important contributor to the Portuguese economy, contributing 9.2% to GDP in 2010 (OECD, 2014). This makes it especially pertinent to investigate how gender equality influences the people who work in the tourism industry. Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realising their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development (Baum, 2013). Achieving greater gender equality is not only a basic human right and aids social cohesion, but it also makes 'smart economic' sense by increasing productivity and efficiency (Ferguson & Alarcón, 2014). Indeed, recently there have been efforts by UN Women to provide a method of calculating the cost of gender inequality to companies, in order to encourage measures to be taken that increase gender equality by stressing how this action can be financially benefice to companies (UN WOMEN, 2015). This illustrates how achieving gender equality within the workplace is a contemporary goal and strategic priority on an international scale.

In the first section the methodology adopted in the empirical study underlying this research is presented and the sample is briefly characterised. In the following sections the results of the study are analysed and discussed. The analysis of the results is based on relevant literature on gender issues in the workplace, gender roles, vertical segregation, work-life balance and the role of institutions in promoting gender equality. Initially, based on quantitative data, women's and men's representativeness in Portuguese tourism companies, namely in managerial versus non-managerial positions, is outlined. Then, tourism managers' knowledge of the existing gender equality issues within their firms is examined. These are set against the organisational measures that are being implemented to promote more equal employment opportunities and fight gender-based discrimination in the workplace. Finally, conclusions are made regarding the potential policy implications of this study's findings.

## 2. Methods

This paper draws on a combination of qualitative and quantitative research to explore the ways in which tourism organisations perceive gender equality and the measures that they take to address the issues associated with gender stereotyping within the labour market. The main research question driving the larger study from which this paper has been based is: *'Does gender equality have a say in the boost of innovative forms of economic growth? How can the economy be revived through networks and internationalisation in the tourism sector?'* This main research question gave rise to supplementary research questions, one of which is the focus of the present paper. In this paper, the aim is to investigate the gender equality measures that have been implemented within Portuguese tourism companies from a feminist economics angle. Hence, the first research question related to investigating the current status

of gender equality in Portuguese tourism companies by analysing the representation of men and women within these companies. The second research question relates to the managers' awareness of gender equality issues within their companies. Finally, the third research question relates to the implementation of gender equality measures in tourism companies, investigating the reasons for their varying levels of success in implementation of such measures and policies.

The method of focus groups was chosen as a valid method of collecting *qualitative* data for this particular project as it is in line with the methodology that posits knowledge to be co-constructed between researcher and researched (Fine, 1994). Whilst the meanings created in human interactions can be perceived as a "shifting carnival of ambiguous complexity" (Scheurich, 1995, p. 243), thus effectively limiting the possibility of any joint construction taking place, every attempt has been made to represent participants' opinions as best possible. Focus groups can provide rich interpretative data as participants try to make sense of the fluid concept of gender by engaging in discussion with other participants and building upon their findings as a group, which also potentially contains an element of awareness-raising for participants themselves (Silverman, 2010).

Focus groups took place in each of the seven Portuguese administrative regions (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics - NUTS) – Continental Portugal: Norte (North), Centro (Centre), Alentejo, Algarve, and Lisboa (Lisbon), and also, the Autonomous Regions of Madeira and Açores (Azores) –, with the objective of collecting information concerning the regional specificities of the tourism industry and tourism employment, from the perspective of the key stakeholders in each region, comparing scenarios and visions about gender issues.

The participants were selected according to their representativeness, job creation capacity, level of connectivity with other agents (within the regional tourism network) and/or their role in the definition and implementation of regional and local policies for

the tourism sector. The focus groups were relatively evenly balanced in terms of male (43) and female (36) participants, which amounted to 54% male participants and 46% female participants in the focus groups overall.

*Quantitative* analysis was applied in order to explore how tourism leaders, who were people in top-management positions, such as senior managers and directors, CEOs and Heads of Service/Department/Sector, perceived gender equality within their organisations. After an analysis of consistency, 401 questionnaires, covering the whole range of tourism characteristic activities as specified by the Tourism Satellite Account (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations, World Tourism Organization, & Commission of the European Communities, 2010), were duly completed and considered valid. The software IBM SPSS (v. 21) was used for the quantitative data analysis. Univariate and bivariate statistical techniques were applied, through exploratory and inferential methods, and a 5% level of significance was adopted.

Table 1 shows how we classified the tourism sub-structures which the managers in this study came from:

### 3. Results and Analysis

For the qualitative research, content analysis methods were used for a systematic examination of data, using an inductive approach. Whilst no approach can be completely classified as inductive due to the influence of theories and prior experiences of the researcher which are such that the researcher does not arrive at the analysis scene as a blank receptacle, this research does endeavour to be inductive (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). An inductive approach is adopted by creating the categories which focus group data is coded into, using themes emerging from the transcripts, rather than solely from the initial questions. Doing so, we deny that it is possible to create laws that explain social processes and hence accept that reality is context bound. In this study the ontological position that there exists a shared social reality regarding how gender equality at work is perceived by leaders in the Portuguese tourism industry, is questioned and it is suggested instead that there are multiple, context-specific truths. Using the method of focus groups to gather the empirical evidence relied upon to construct versions of what

**Table 1** | List of categories of tourism characteristic industries/activities

Categories as defined in the TSA* Methodological Framework	Categories as considered in this study
1. Accommodation services for visitors	Axis 1. Accommodation
2. Food- and beverage-serving services/activities	Axis 2. Food and beverage-serving activities
3. Railway passenger transport services	Axis 3. Passenger transport (including rental services)
4. Road passenger transport services	
5. Water passenger transport services	
6. Air passenger transport services	
7. Transport equipment rental services	
8. Travel agencies and other reservation services/activities	Axis 4. Travel agencies and tour operators
9. Cultural services/activities	Axis 5. Cultural services
10. Sports and recreational services/activities	Axis 6. Sports and recreational services
11. Retail trade of country-specific tourism characteristic goods	Axis 7. Other tourism-related services
12. Other country-specific tourism characteristic services/activities	

\* As the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) is internationally recognised as the most appropriate statistical tool for a comprehensive and systematic assessment of the direct, indirect and induced impacts of tourism activity, it was adapted for this study.

Source: Own construction.

constitutes the 'truth' in this study, we draw out the complexity, nuance and contradiction through participants' conflicting opinions, hence making the creation of knowledge to be co-constructed among participants and researcher. This is because focus groups allow for the more 'natural' behaviour of participants, than would be exhibited for example in a one-to-one interview (Leavy, 2014).

### 3.1. Current state of representation of women and men within Portuguese tourism organisations

This study finds a high predominance of women working within tourism organisations in Portugal with 42% of questionnaire respondents saying that there are more women than men in their organisa-

tion and only 29.5% of respondents saying that there are an equal number of men to women in the company. This finding is in line with international research on the gender composition of the tourism labour market (Twining-Ward, 2010).

Gender inequality in terms of career development and also remuneration is true not only in tourism, but in other industries as well, as in reality women perform 66% of the world's work, produce 50% of the food, but earn 10% of the income and own 1% of the property (UN WOMEN, 2015). This gap in the wages women earn in tourism is also illustrated by the predominance of women in non-managerial positions (38.8%) in the present study (Figure 1). Only 18.6% of women are in top-level management positions, compared to 47.7% of men holding the same position.

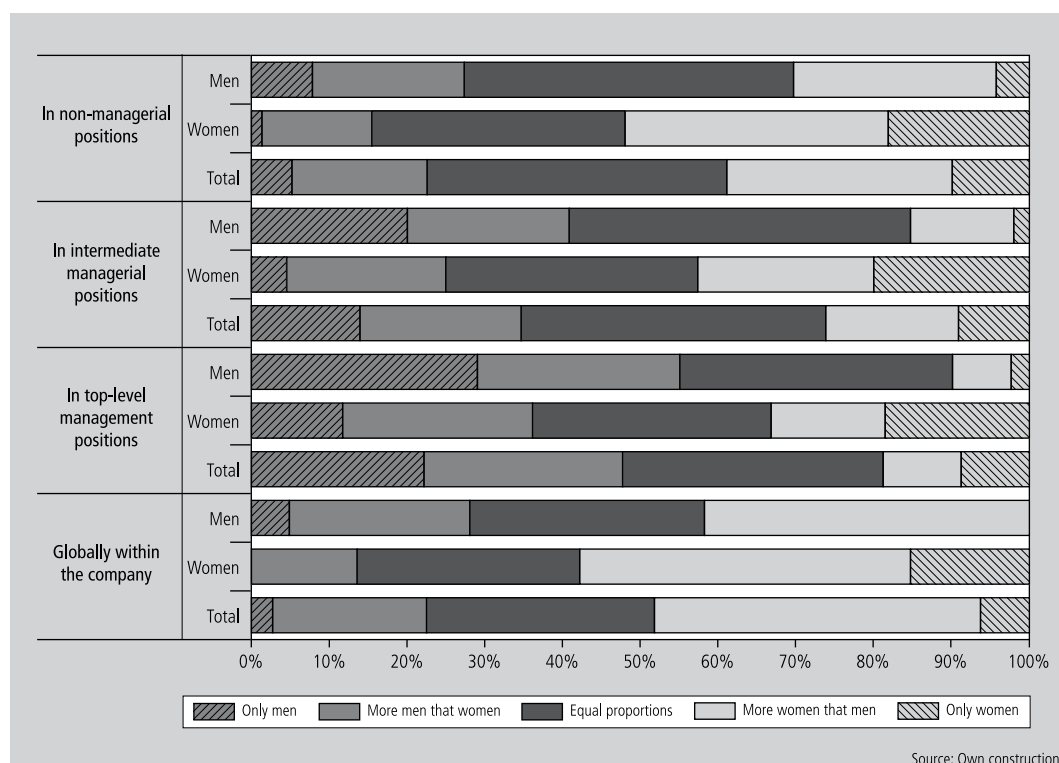


Figure 1 | Women's hierarchical positions in the Portuguese tourism industry.

Indeed, quantitative analysis shows that there is a statistically significant association between gender and career development. Looking at the gender of the CEO and the percentage of women's representativeness in senior positions, it is observed that women are less well represented in companies owned by men and vice versa. Statistical significant associations are found between the gender of the respondents and the representativeness of men and women in their companies, both at the higher management positions ( $\chi^2(4)=46.256$ ;  $p<.001$ ), and at the intermediate management positions ( $\chi^2(4)=57.346$ ;  $p<.001$ ), or at the non-management positions ( $\chi^2(4)=30.950$ ;  $p<.001$ ).

Currently Portugal is ranked 51<sup>st</sup> in the 2013 Global Gender Gap Index (Schwab et al., 2013) overall, and 66<sup>th</sup> in terms of economic participation and opportunity, which shows that there is room for improvement in creating workplaces that exhibit greater gender equality in their treatment of workers. Indeed, Portugal has a gender wage gap, which is measured as 16.3% of the median male wage, which is quite high for the OECD Member Economies average (15.5%) (OECD, 2015).

Looking at the distribution of men and women among the various tourism substructures is also interesting as illustrated in Figure 2.

### 3.2. Managers' awareness of gender equality measures

Efforts to expand opportunities for women in the labour market and to establish gender equality in the workplace have been part of policy objectives in most OECD countries for some decades. However, recent research reports that gender inequalities in a number of areas persist – from equal pay to representation at the upper levels of organizational management and corporate governance (Walby, Gottfried, Gottschall, & Osawa, 2007). Hence, in the section, the level of tourism organisations' knowledge of the existence of gender equality issues within their company is explored. Focus group data reveals that the majority of participants refer to gender equality as being an issue of women maintaining a *work-life balance*. Whilst gender permeates all aspects of personal and economic life, determining who makes what choices in life, few participants developed the topic further than mentioning if their company had policies in place to 'help' women with childcare arrangements. As one participant says: *'the woman has different needs of men, hence demanding a higher absenteeism index'*. This illustrates how gender roles that connect femininity with primary childcare responsibility, are very deeply embedded within society.

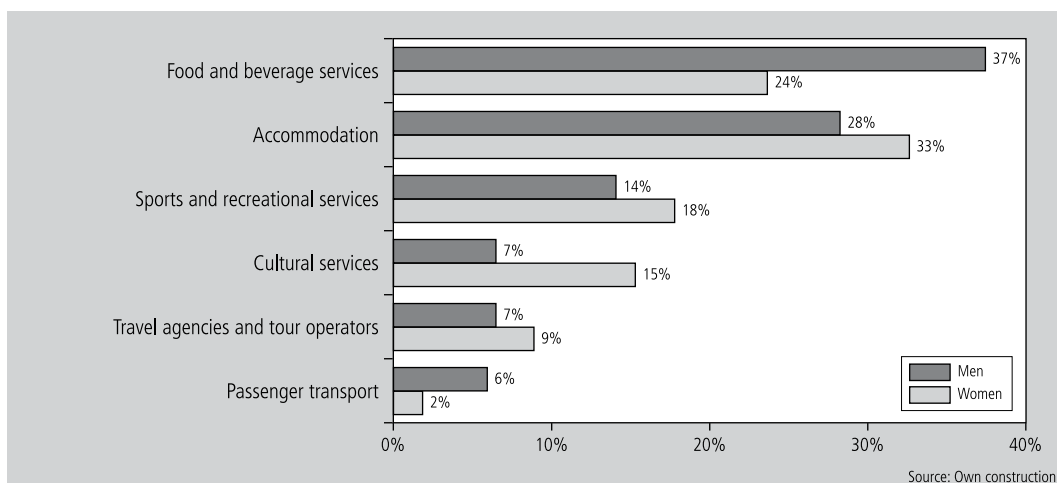


Figure 2 | Distribution of the respondents by gender, per type of tourism activity.

Research on women working in tourism in Turkey and Uganda, illustrates how primary childcare responsibilities both constrain and motivate women to engage in tourism entrepreneurship, showing the complex relationship between gender roles and economic roles (Tucker & Boonabaana, 2011). Saying that 'a woman has different needs', may refer to the time period when a woman gives birth, but largely refers to the life-long childcare responsibilities that women are socially conditioned to shoulder.

Another participant's narration further establishes the connection between femininity and care responsibilities, by saying that: *'there has to be freedom, not for women to work less, but so they have more flexibility'*. This participant is presumably talking about women having more flexibility than men. McRobbie (2007) points out the importance of flexibility as he suggests that capitalism is driven by the way in which women's labour is re-distributed. However, this kind of 'flexibility' tactic, far from decreasing the gender divide, could actually increase it as men are progressively pushed out of caring responsibilities, and gender roles connecting motherhood to caring are further established. Whilst dealing with the symptoms of the problem, i.e. giving women more flexibility regarding working hours than men, is a partial solution, it is a superficial treatment for an 'illness' that has deep roots within society. Gender roles regarding whose responsibility it is for childcare responsibilities are influenced by politico-economic structures. For example, policies that afford parental care leave or flexibility at work can be extended to both parents, in order for more gender equal work environments to exist. Looking at European countries, such as Sweden (Duvander & Johansson, 2012), that have created parental leave schemes that have mandatory parental leave for fathers to look after their children, we observe that a higher level of gender equality is starting to materialize (Wall & Escobedo, 2013). However, when considering the application of policies dealing with gender equality at work, it is also important to consider that a growing emphasis at the national and EU levels

concerning the universal breadwinner ideal, leaves gender inequality in unpaid work unproblematised (Ciccia & Verloo, 2012).

### 3.2.1. 'I think it's a false problem': Gender's invisibility

A large majority of the participant leaders of tourism in Portugal expressed the idea that the goal of achieving gender equality at work was in fact a non-goal, as they saw little influence of gender on business processes. Indeed, one participant says how the lack of equal opportunities for women and men *'is a false problem'* as it does not exist in his mind. Another participant echoes this perception of gender not being a problem, as he says that: *'the discussion about equal opportunities must be made around the people's competencies and not peoples' gender'*. Indeed, many participants do not believe that gender inequality exists within their company because it is a 'modern' company, meaning that whilst once upon a time these problems existed, now they don't anymore. As one participant says: *'I believe my co-workers are so modern and updated that these sexist thoughts do not exist at our workplace'*. Indeed, gender roles are always in flux and reflect societal changes which are instigated by politico-economic changes of scenery. However, in the Portuguese context, gender inequality at the workplace continues to exist, indicated by the existing gender gap in pay (World Economic Forum, 2013). A historical account of workplace sexual harassment over the last 30 years, also indicates this. The fact that women are still largely the victims of sexual harassment at work, means that the stereotypical gender roles that encourage this type of behaviour are very much present within workplaces (McDonald, 2012).

The way that participants in this study perceive gender as being effectively 'invisible', allows for an examination of the ways in which the underlying processes of the economy are discursively constituted and hence facilitates a critical evaluation of the dialectic between power and knowledge. Hence, from a feminist economic angle, participant perceptions that, as one participant says: *'there is*

*no discrimination of any kind*' within their work place, reveal an underlying discourse of heterodox economics that all humans are rational beings operating in exclusion to other, often gendered, constraints on their activity (Barker, 2005). However, feminised labour input requirements, also need to be taken into consideration in economic analyses, as they influence women's potential opportunities and choices within productive labour. Furthermore, altruistic processes involved in social reproductive work complicate the neoclassical economic assumption that individuals maximize their utility, because of intangible things like happiness and love are difficult to measure (Folbre, 2012).

The contradiction between the perceived influence of gender roles on women who work and the actual influence, is evident within a participant's comment. He says: *'There is absolutely no discrimination. For us this is not a problem. I never thought about this situation as the only area where we find only men is the Board of Directors'*. The participant's emphatic denial of gender playing any role within work choices, is then contradicted by his admittance that the highest echelons of power are occupied by only men. However, literature on vertical segregation (Carvalho et al., 2014; Paula England, 2010; Kulik & Olekalns, 2012), illustrates the many ways in which gender roles influence career progression. Hence, the contradictory statement regarding the lack of discrimination despite the reality of an all-male board of directors, illustrates how most participants have *'never thought about this situation'*. Perhaps in the interest of political correctness, they give the impression of knowing if their company is gender aware or not.

A poststructuralist angle on the way that organisations operate, brings to the fore how an organisation is a socially situated practice made out of individuals who continually act out gendered practices (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Hence, participants are viewed as the embodiment of gendered organisational practices. So when individuals themselves are embedded in this discourse, the difficulty of

distinguishing discrimination based on gender roles, is apparent, which also means that the organisation itself faces difficulty in being 'gender-aware'. As one participant says on this subject: *'I think people have a thought about gender equality issues at some point. However, these concerns are still not reflected at the organisational level.'*

Another participant mentions how being a family business eradicates any gender equality problems as they say: *'gender issues don't exist in our case, due to the family nature of the business. Men and women freely take on similar roles, depending on their availability and time.'* Saying that people 'freely' take on roles is a popular misconception. From the moment one is born they are imbibed in social norms that dictate how we conduct ourselves. Similarly, within a work environment, there are socially accepted roles that people take on. England (2010), for example, talks about the way that gender influences involvement in certain occupations, as women are for more likely to cross-over into 'masculine' type occupations, than men cross-over into 'feminine' type occupations. This is explained by the feminisation of labour which has historically meant that feminised occupations such as cleaning and caring are perceived of as having less value and thus are paid less (England & Folbre, 2003).

Whilst class, race and economic standing also play a role in the way gendered subjects within tourism experience inequality in the workplace, it is still gender roles that largely determine the value of the work women do within tourism (Figueroa-Domecq, Pritchard, Segovia-Pérez, Morgan, & Villacé-Molinero, 2015). This can be seen in the examination of the lives of three different 'types' of women engaging in tourism work – a migrant from the First World, a migrant from the Third World and a national. Vandergrift (2008) finds that, in the Costa Rican tourist destination of Puerto Viejo, although women's capacity to produce labour is ethnically and nationally segmented, the reward for completing this labour is similarly low-paid, illustrating how gender plays a role in how work is valued.



In addition to the low value of work considered to have a connection to femininity, women also are primary held responsible for childcare which further reduces their worth in the labour market. This is confirmed by a participant who says: *'women having children is not necessarily bad, but it reduces your value as a professional'*. These two factors illustrate how gender equality at work is deeply rooted within socially embedded roles that dictate feminised responsibility for caring.

### 3.3. Organisational strategies to increase gender equality within tourism organisations

Despite the complex nature of participants' awareness of gender equality within the workplace, the idea that the tourism industry needs to have mechanisms in place to eradicate gender discriminations is supported. One participant stresses how gender equality measures are important because, as he says: *'It is an economic problem, because their failure to protect the woman and hence promote birth rates, makes it a problem for the economy.'* So various measures are being taken by tourism companies in order to promote more gender equality amongst employees. This is a recent development, as one participant mentions how this has only started to occur in the last 6-7 years. As he says: *'only recently, 6 or 7 years ago did we decide to address these issues in an autonomous manner'*. Indeed, gender-equality specific policies are still very much at infancy, partly because of the lack of recognition of economic value in increasing gender equality at work. As one participant says: *'Human resources are usually under the responsibility of those who are in charge of the finance department and don't look at these issues specifically... It seems to me that most companies don't have policies that protect the woman'*.

Other participants express how the whole idea of social responsibility within companies, under which the subject of increasing gender equality

falls, is purely a marketing ploy and hence not taken seriously. As one participant says of gender equality policies: *'this is like social marketing, which is not intended to be social, but to look like the company is doing something for society'*. However, other participants do see the benefits of introducing gender equality measures, highlighting how these can actually boost productivity. As one participant says of the implementation of gender equality policies within companies: *'it serves to prove that you don't lose money, on the contrary it can boost productivity'*. The reasons for adopting gender equality measures are related to socio-cultural and politico-economic factors as described next.

#### 3.3.1. Changing family structures encourage the adoption of measures

Many of the measures that do exist are influenced by changing family structures, since recent years have seen divorce rates in Portugal rise dramatically and the number of mothers who work has also increased (Torres, 2008). The changes in family structure have repercussions on childcare arrangements, which in turn influence the way in which caring gender roles are performed. For example, recent research shows that men are more central within the family and more involved in housework now (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, & Lappegård, 2015). To this extent, a participant mentions how since getting divorced, her business partner took on childcare responsibilities and so everyone in the company adjusted their schedules for him to be able to pick up his son from school. As she says: *'He had a fixed time to get him and we adjusted our meetings to fit everyone's agenda'*.

The increased responsabilisation of men for social reproduction duties also affects the importance given to having workplace policies that allow for more flexibility regarding childcare. Also as what is perceived as an exclusively feminine occupation is progressively being masculinised by men taking on child-caring roles, companies seem to be realising the importance of providing employees with child-

care options. On the other hand, the high influx of women into the workforce, also influences the need for more flexible work-hours.

### 3.3.2. Various measures implemented

According to participants, there is a proliferation of gender equality policies being adopted by tourism companies, which are largely related to childcare measures. As one participant says: *'Companies are trying to follow the changes [in family structures] by offering day care centres, schools or allowing people to work from home'*. Another participant remarks how their company provides *'reduced working hours for those who have children under 12 years old'*. Other measures include: *'not scheduling tasks at inconvenient times'* and offering a 10% discount to employees at certain kindergartens. Another participant highlighted how in Faro, in the Algarve, Portugal, which receives the highest number of tourist per annum in Portugal, the municipality has had a central role in providing work-family reconciliation measures for tourism employees in the form of holiday camps for tourism employees' children. As he says: *'In already existing buildings and facilities, that are under the municipality's management, they created holiday camps for the employees' children'*. Another measure that Portuguese tourism companies are taking to increase gender equality through increasing a work-family balance is by creating a nursery that operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. As one participant says, this was very important to them, it was a *'precious help'* because it allowed them to have peace of mind regarding childcare.

### 3.3.3. Size matters

However, many participants point out that there is a difference between the measures that companies can apply, depending on their size. For example the 24-hour nursery mentioned above was part of the Portuguese national airline company's policy. As one participant says: *'It is easy for a big company to create the conditions for a better*

*work-family balance. A company of 1700 workers can manage things more objectively. A small hotel of 15 employees, if three of them are at home with parental leave, it is difficult to organise work shifts.'*

Since in 2012 the EU service industry was made up by 99.8% of companies with under 10 employees (European Commission, 2013), the significance of this observation in the implementation of gender equality measures within tourism companies, is obvious. Whilst SMEs are vital to the tourism industry (Peters & Buhalis, 2013), they have specificities when considering their labour-force which need to be taken into consideration when creating policies that aim at increasing gender equality within tourism labour.

### 3.3.4. Not the company's responsibility

Whilst most participants feel that measures to increase the provision of equal opportunities for both men and women are the employer's responsibility, some participants did not think it should be the company's responsibility. One participant illustrates this opinion particularly well by saying that: *'it's not the company that should adjust to the workers' needs, it is the employees that should adjust to the company's needs'*. Similarly, another participant shows how family responsibility tasks which are largely feminised, are rarely taken into consideration by employees, who view these tasks as an impediment. He says: *'It's impossible for me to have someone in an agency that comes to me and says 'now I am leaving because I have to take my son to school'. If they have that kind of attitude they're not suitable to work in tourism or in any other area'*. This type of attitude illustrates the contemporary clash between an increased push to accumulate accentuated by capitalist policies, and the ongoing need to reproduce as a species (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Whilst the participant does not mention the sex of the employee he refers to, it is often women who are at the middle of this dyadic separation of economic worlds. Indeed, this attitude of an employer's inconsiderate attitude

towards women who have caring responsibilities, also talks to the devaluation of feminised labour, like childcare. This devaluation arises from the failure to take child rearing as a public good and support those who do so via state payments (Paula England, 2010). It results in paid, productive labour being assumed as of superior value and importance to social reproductive tasks.

Other participants express the opinion that the state welfare system should play a more significant role in increasing gender equality at work, by providing childcare services. As one participant says: *'the issues of childcare and old peoples' homes are pushed as the companies' responsibility when the state does not have enough resources, although this should be the state's responsibility'*. The role of the welfare state in Europe is well-established, but neoliberal political directions which aim at drawing responsibilisation from citizen well-being away from the state and towards private institutions, are on the rise. This is very much in-line with the commercialisation strategies that are increasingly employed in order to increase profit margins. Institutions are shaped by gender norms and based on the male-breadwinner model which fails to address inequality, even in states with strong welfare provision such as Sweden (Eriksen, Addis, Degavre, & De Villota, 2013). Hence the need for considering alternative welfare models becomes apparent. Whilst there has been much literature on the interaction of gender and welfare, and indeed many welfare policies are focused on gender such as those on fertility, immigrants, care workers and mother's employment (Orloff, 2011), there is no in-depth study of how gender roles, welfare and tourism labour are inter-related in the contemporary Portuguese context. Investigating along these lines could provide a fruitful insight into the ways in which gender permeates tourism economic processes.

As a concluding remark to this section, it is interesting to note that the success of gender equality measures implemented by tourism companies is highly dependent on the cultural context that

moulds employees' gender roles. One participant points this out by highlighting how even though there is adequate provision of private childcare services in areas with high tourism activity, the offer often supersedes the demand, because *'it will always be required of women to leave work at 6pm to take care of their children'*. This talks to the way in which gender roles connected to femininity, dictate primary responsibility for childcare, despite the changing face of labour demands on women. This happens partly because the dominance of male norms have changed much less in 'the personal' than in the job world (England, 2010, p. 155). One way of integrating this into policies would be to attempt to 'de-gender' normative obligations to care, based on the idea that if women cared less, the economic disadvantages to them would be fewer than if they did care (Folbre, 2012).

#### 4. Conclusions

The analysis of quantitative and qualitative research in this paper raises various points for consideration on the topic of gender equality within tourism labour and gender equality measures tourism companies adopt. Drawing on poststructuralist theorising which addresses issues of visibility/invisibility, is useful in this instance as evidence of gender essentialism within participant accounts, reveals the mechanisms in which gender becomes and continues to be, invisible. As individuals themselves are embedded in this discourse, it is difficult to distinguish discrimination based on gender roles, which also means that the organisation itself faces difficulty in being 'gender-aware'.

Indeed, caution should be taken when applying policies that promote greater flexibility at work for female employees, as rather than actually solving the problem, companies' responses regarding providing women with more flexibility at work can actually result in perpetuating stereotyped gender roles con-

necting women to primary childcare responsibilities. As it is these caring roles that perpetuate the continuing lack of equality in opportunities within the labour market for men and women, alternative solutions need to be considered.

This research shows that small companies (SMEs) have particular problems in implementing gender equality measures. Looking at SMEs in the US that implement policies that aid social and environmental goals, it is evident that social equality measures such as those that aim at offering equal opportunities for men and women within the workplace, are feasible to implement and simultaneously remain profitable (Arend, 2014). Hence, it is suggested that policies should be implemented in Portugal targeting SMEs to offer help in the creation and implementation of suitable gender equality measures that maintain productivity and efficiency. Since there is the perceptions among tourism managers that the responsibility for greater gender equality should be the state's responsibility, creation of such policies should be reflect this notion of state help provision.

Indeed, an even higher level of gender equality within tourism companies could be achieved via policies as the constitutional level. A recent worldwide study into women's representation in parliament, shows that women's representation is larger in countries with constitutional protection from gender-based discrimination (Austen & Mavisakalyan, 2015). By creating policies in Portugal at the constitutional level that combat gender-based discrimination, the tourism industry will benefit from increased gender equality at work. Through increased gender equality, not only goals of increased social cohesion will be achieved, but also increased productivity and economic efficiency.

However, since 'changes in the gender system are uneven' (England, 2010, p. 161), affecting the lives of some people more than others, this should be taken into consideration when formulating and implementing measures aimed at increasing equality in the opportunities available to men and women within the tourism labour market.

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