

Students demand for higher education in Tourism and the perception of gender issues in a Tourism degree

Procura de estudantes por ensino superior em Turismo e a perceção das questões de género em licenciatura em Turismo

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Abstract | Tourism Studies are considered as an autonomous scientific area in higher education (HE). Therefore, our analysis is based on its evolution in Portugal and the reality in relation to gender issues in this scientific field. This research intends to understand some trends in tourism education, especially in a national context, the characteristics of students' demand in a tourism and hospitality higher education institution (HEI) and, specifically, the perception of gender issues by students taking the degree of Tourism and Leisure (TL). The Portuguese HEIs have invested significantly in this field and, in this context of growth, we analyse the School of Tourism and Hospitality (STH) to understand its vocational orientation and the specificities of the educational demand. The methodology relies on a literature review to contextualize the current paradigms of HE in Tourism and its connection to gender issues. The analysis of primary and secondary information on key indicators is about the courses' offer and students' demand at the STH could help to understand the institutional framework. The primary data was obtained with an intentional sample of students from the TL degree. The marketing strategy of STH could be improved through better knowledge about the students' profile and the adaptation of the educational offer.

Keywords | Gender, tourism, higher education, students' demand, employment.

Resumo | Os Estudos de Turismo são considerados como uma área científica autónoma no ensino superior (ES). Portanto, a nossa análise é baseada na sua evolução em Portugal e a realidade em relação às questões de género neste domínio científico. Esta pesquisa pretende entender algumas tendências na educação em turismo, especialmente no contexto nacional, as características da procura dos alunos das instituições de ensino superior (IES) em turismo e hospitalidade e, especificamente, a perceção das questões de género por estudantes da licenciatura Turismo e Lazer (TL). As IES portuguesas têm investido significativamente neste campo e, neste contexto de crescimento, analisamos a Escola

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de Turismo e Hotelaria (ETH) para compreender a sua orientação vocacional e as especificidades da procura educativa. A metodologia baseia-se numa revisão da literatura para contextualizar os paradigmas atuais em Turismo no ES e sua conexão com as questões de género. A análise da informação primária e secundária de indicadores-chave é sobre a oferta de cursos e a procura de alunos na ETH poderia ajudar a compreender o quadro institucional. Os dados primários foram obtidos com uma amostra intencional de alunos da licenciatura em TL. A estratégia de marketing da ETH poderia ser melhorada através do melhor conhecimento sobre o perfil dos alunos e para a adaptação da oferta educativa.

Palavras-chave | Género, turismo, ensino superior, procura de estudantes, emprego.

1. Introduction

The growing importance of Tourism, particularly in HE, requires an analysis and interpretation of its evolution in Portugal. Assuming the widespread recognition of tourism and leisure with a transversal influence from the contemporary society, we consider the interest for rigorous studies on the implications of gender issues in knowledge production in an HEI.

Therefore, this study intends to understand the trends in students' demand for a degree in the Tourism field, the importance of gender questions in HE and their implications for the labour market. The research is mainly aimed at interpreting the need and importance of studies on gender issues in tourism HE, to determine how the image of the STH and its students' demand may rely on the policy and strategy, including the relevant gender issues, both variables in an educational and employment perspective.

The Portuguese HEI invested significantly in this field over the last 29 years and it is still very important nowadays, because the degree's vacancies represent 3.8% of the total in 2014-15. In reality, the number of students decreased in HE in several traditional scientific areas. The Bologna Process (BP) led to significant changes in the philosophy and structure of HE courses, particularly at a curriculum level and teaching-learning process. In this context, we characterise the educational project of the STH to understand its vocational orientation and the

specificities of the educational offer and the demand, namely regarding gender characteristics.

The methodology depends on the literature review to contextualize the paradigms of the HE system and gender issues in tourism education and labour market, to determine policy trends and the implementation of successful strategies. This study intends to understand better the importance of gender issues in the evolution and the development project of STH (Salgado, Martins & Reis, 2014; Salgado, Martins & Godinho, 2014), through the collection and analysis of primary and secondary information on key indicators about courses' supply and students' demand in this HEI, which has a clearly defined institutional framework in tourism and hospitality fields. The primary data are obtained with an intentional sample of students in the TL degree. The applied survey was based on some indicators from the research by Costa, Carvalho e Breda (2011) to allow some results' comparisons. It is possible to register from secondary data that, at national level, the majority of HE candidates are female and have obtained grades higher at a secondary education level.

The hypothesis of this study aims to ascertain the existence of significant association between the growth of tourism education at a national level, the development of the educational project of the STH and the importance of a dynamic gender policy. It is possible to observe (Figure 3) that the female percentage indicates their importance in STH, especially in the TL degree. This is an important fact that should

be taken into consideration to define the marketing strategy for maximization of results in the admission of students in tourism degrees.

This analysis may be important to make several recommendations to a more effective management of the STH, in the context of the national and regional networks of HE. The results of this study support the need to invest in understanding students' demand for this particular area of study at a national level. This seems also true for the promotion of an increasing students' demand on STH, with the main purpose of using a gendered strategy that could improve its competitiveness. The marketing strategy of an HEI, at regional and national levels, should be supported with systematic knowledge about the students' profile in order to effectively contribute to more adequate management decisions and, consequently, to higher satisfaction levels of all stakeholders.

2. Gender issues in tourism higher education

To understand the context of this topic, nowadays, we refer to central ideas from some authors. For example, Swain (1995) wrote an important paper "Gender in Tourism" in a special issue of the *Annals of Tourism Research* dedicated to this subject, which seems to be notable for giving more value to studies crossing these two areas. She argues that tourism and the industry that supports it is built of human relations, and thus impacts and is impacted by global and local gender relations.

According to Hjalager (2003), students increasingly regard a career in tourism as an opportunity for a career abroad or with an international company. She considers that male students tend to be more adventurous than female students, who also more frequently prefer small firms to larger ones. In the study by Costa, Caçador, Carvalho e Breda (2013), they interpret the influences of higher education-related variables on the career paths of tourism

graduates in Portugal and Brazil, while taking into account gender differences. The data collected in the two countries provide empirical evidence that pursuing a tourism postgraduate degree provides access to better conditions in the labour market and attenuates gender inequalities.

Inui, Wheeler e Lankford (2006) argues that tourism in HE tends to focus on preparing students for future careers in the industry and so little attention has been devoted to the meaning of tourism education. An interesting exercise was created made by Scott-Halsell, Blum e Huffman (2011) about the links between the hospitality schools and this sector. As a service-based industry, tourism relies on the ability of its managers to be service minded and guest focused as it is important to understand how the work is done 'from school desks to front desks', in order to better prepare the students with regards to emotional intelligence, namely in terms of gender representation (60.8% female) in the students' group. On the other hand, in the same study, it is observed that females represent 57.8% in the industry professionals and the educational achievement indicator of graduate degree is 12.8%.

In fact, this subject is gaining more importance in Portugal, especially with the contributions of the Gentour project that is being developed at the Aveiro University. Costa et al. (2011) indicate that men were more connected to the public sphere and women to the private sphere, but they believe that, in the last decades, this situation changed because "women are increasingly better educated than men, particularly concerning tertiary education" (quoting Eurostat, 2010). The inequalities resulting from these constraints are vertical and horizontal segregation of employment, lower employment rates for women, particularly in full-time employment, as well as more precarious employment situations and lower salaries, so "it is thus important to analyze these indicators in order to understand the situation of men and women concerning paid employment" (Costa et al., 2011, p. 41). In their study about gender inequalities in tourism employment in Portugal, it was observed that

men represent only 39.9% and 60.1% are women, that allows us to consider the huge disproportion in favour of female workforce in this sector.

According to Costa et al. (2011, p. 39), the Portuguese reality shows that it is “vertically segregated and, despite being a feminised sector, men occupy most top-level positions. Moreover, tourism workers, particularly female workers, are in general subject to poorer conditions of employment, such as low-pay, long working hours and more precarious contracts. The data [collected by these authors] hint at a very wide gender pay gap in the tourism industry”. Carvalho, Costa, Lykke e Torres (2014) recognized specific differences between accommodation services and travel agencies and tour operators in Portugal. But in general, they concluded that women are more prevalent in low qualified jobs, while men are more likely to hold executive and management positions and women’s pay is consistently lower.

Costa et al. (2011, p. 52) also refer the Portuguese tourism sector as highly feminised and where the average levels of education are low. Male workers are concentrated in the regions where tourism is more developed and tourism workers are best paid (Algarve and Madeira). It is also a sector with a vertical segregation market: there is a high number of Portuguese women who are unskilled workers; even though tourism is female-dominated, there are more male than female directors and executives, which denotes vertical segregation; vertical segregation is particularly marked in the F&B subsector.

Sigüenza, Brotons e Huete (2013, p. 182) analyse the evolution of gender inequality in the tourism employment in Spain and refer that “women get a wage below men and there are new forms of occupational segregation between women and men and even women themselves: the division between part-time and full-time jobs is a good example of this process”, so the quality of tourism employment should be constantly studied including from the perspective of gender. It seems that there are similar patterns in terms of gender concerns between the Iberian countries.

Costa, Carvalho, Caçador e Breda (2012, p. 70) also analysed the HE and the labour market in the tourism sector and concluded that “although women prevail among tourism graduates in Portugal, men earn higher salaries and fill most top-level positions in the tourism sector. [Their] study diagnose[d] disparities between male and female tourism graduates in the following domains: areas of activity, positions, and salary”.

In terms of education of tourism workers, Costa et al. (2011, p. 44-45) conclude that these workers are less represented in higher levels of education than workers in general and, on average, are more concentrated in lower education categories. They indicate that “regarding high-skilled individuals, there is a low percentage of workers with at least post-secondary education in the tourism sector”, if compared with the economy as a whole. The percentage of employees who have graduated in the tourism sector is particularly low (6.8% of men and 13.8% of women in all areas total vs 2% of men and 3% of women in the tourism area).

Berrozpe, Lasarte e Martínez (2013, p. 51) indicate that “despite women are a very relevant collective sector for the tourism sector in Spain, as they nourish in higher percentages than men in both professional and academic fields, they keep on being under-represented in positions of responsibility in the academic and scientific areas”.

In relation to training in tourism, they identify a gender gap in the numbers of students studying tourism / enrolled on a tourism degree at Zaragoza University (Berrozpe et al., 2013, p. 56), because it “can be seen that women constitute a large majority of students, 69%, versus 31% of men”. This trend is similar to those seen in HE in Portugal and across the world.

WTTC (2014) presented an interesting essay to better understand the issue of “Gender equality and youth employment: Travel & Tourism as a key employer of women and young people” that could be important in the development of positive actions for the future development of tourism. Another tool

is the Global Report on Women in Tourism (OMT, 2011), where we can observe the main future challenges for promoting women's empowerment in tourism in five main areas: employment, education, entrepreneurship, leadership and community. In terms of employment, it suggests: increase awareness of the important economic role that women play in the tourism industry; strengthen legal protection for women in tourism employment; such protections include minimum wage regulations and equal pay laws; improve maternity leave requirements, flexible hours, work-from-home options, and arrangements for childcare. In the education domain, it recommends promoting women's participation in tourism education and training and improving the educational level of women already working in different areas of the industry through a targeted and strategic program of action. The entrepreneurial program should facilitate women's tourism entrepreneurship by ensuring women's access to credit, land and property, as well as providing appropriate training and resources to support women's enterprises. The leadership program could support women's tourism leadership at all levels: public sector, private sector, and community management by establishing leadership programs at national level and in large and small-scale tourism enterprises. The community should ensure that women's contribution to community development is properly recognized and rewarded by taking into account women's unpaid work and by monitoring tourism activities carried out in the household and in the community. This report synthesizes several crucial areas of action for future policy.

3. Characterization of the School of Tourism and Hospitality

The STH is an organic unit of the Polytechnic Institute of Guarda (IPG) for teaching and research in the areas of Tourism and Hospitality located in Seia. Thus, it is a public HEI at the service of society, for the

production and dissemination of knowledge, creation, transmission and dissemination of culture and knowledge of a professional, scientific, technological and artistic nature, through the study, teaching, research and oriented experimental development. Their mission is to train professionals, with an emphasis on. "how to do", "know how" and "how to be", stimulating regional development. It was created in 1999 under the name School of Tourism and Telecommunications of Seia, as a part of the organic unit in IPG (*Diário da República*, 1999). In 2004, this HEI started operating with modern and well equipped facilities, built from scratch.

The implementation of the BP guidelines to the degree courses in TL, Information Technology for Tourism and Hotel Management occurred in 2006. In 2008, technological specialization courses in Management Touristic Entertainment and Restaurant Techniques, which first ran in 2009/10, were created. It was also in that year that the institution changed the name to STH and began teaching the degree in Food Production and Restaurant and Catering (2008/09). In 2010, the master's degree in Management and Sustainability in Tourism began, as a result of a partnership between STH and the School of Tourism and Sea Technology of the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria. Thus, it runs degree courses at undergraduate and master's level, and also confers degrees of technological expertise. Accountability, openness and responsibility in the relationship between the educational community of STH is present in the acronym – ESTHAR – representative of Excellence, Solidarity, Transparency, Humanism, Openness, and Rigor.

The STH aims to stand out in the landscape of HE in Tourism and Hospitality and contribute to the stimulation of tourism development in the region where it operates, as well as establishing bilateral relations with training centres of reference internationally, being more proactive in relation with the labour market, in that it seeks to maintain a privileged relationship with professionals from the tourism, hotel and catering sectors, enabling students to conduct internships in Portugal and abroad, aiming

to consolidate training acquired in their degrees, and meets requirements to prepare students for different occupations, providing good conditions for teaching and learning.

4. Methodology and data analysis

The analysis of the training offer in STH is supported by secondary data collected from the Ministry of Science and Education. In turn, the methodology supporting the collection of primary data for this study was based on the application of a questionnaire. This questionnaire followed the model and the structure of a wider inquiry, which was used at national level on a research project Gentour (Costa et al., 2011), and aimed to investigate graduates and students from tourism degrees across Portugal. From this more complex questionnaire, the most appropriate questions for the analysis of students in the degree of TL were selected, to find out their opinions and expectations about the training, employment, performance in job positions, performance in positions of leadership, women as a group with their own needs, discrimination/perception of (in)equality of opportunity in employment and, finally, issues of respondent identification. The implementation of the

survey to the target population was held on April 8 of 2014 in three classes of TL degree. It appears that the respondents are generally the most assiduous to classes and showing greater interest in school work.

4.1.Secondary data analysis

The data analysis (Figure 1) shows that the relative number of STH vacancies nationally rose steadily until 2005/2006 (from 2.79% to 4.9%), and from then on, as an administrative rule set, the number of vacancies in the general scheme remained at 104 vacancies until 2013/14. However, the relative number has fallen consistently since then (up to 3.5% in 2013/14), but not by reducing its absolute number, which was institutionally “frozen”, but by increasing the number of vacancies at a national level. This seems to be contradictory, because it appears to represent a notable lack of coordination and serious thinking about the size of the network of HE at a national level for the teaching of tourism. Obviously, the number of vacancies and their distribution among degrees reflects the vicissitudes of STH, the creation and evolution of several degrees as well as the policy of HEI trying to tailor their training supply with student demand, which features an increasingly volatile and unpredictable feature.

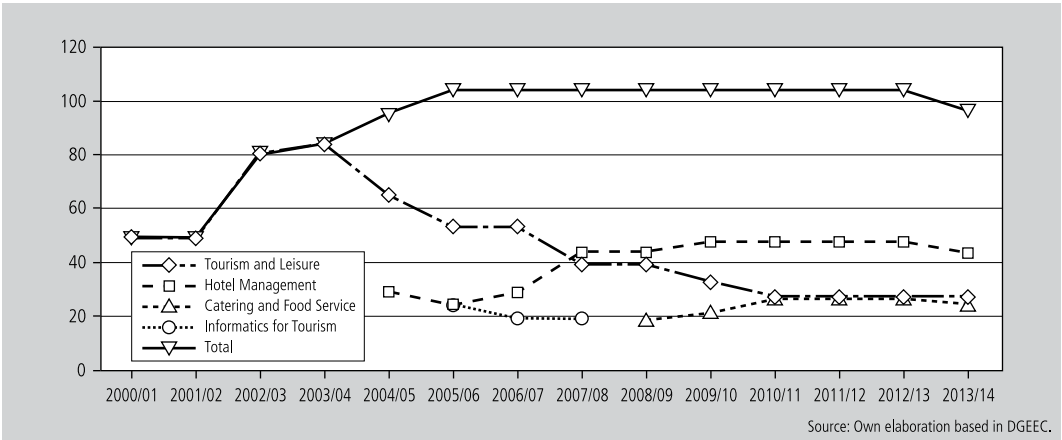


Figure 1 | Degrees' vacancies and total.

An observation from figure 2 shows that the STH experienced a peak level of vacancies in 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, the period from which a two-stage degree no longer existed due to the implementation of the BP and a slight decrease. The last three years have seen a decrease in the total number of students. On the other hand, the trend is visible among the various groups of applicants, the Tourism and Leisure area loses the predominance to Hospitality and Restaurant areas, due to the introduction of degrees in Hotel Management and Restaurant and Catering.

In figure 3 we observe that there is a general predominance of females gender in STH by applicants and also by placement on the degrees. In the

first academic years (2000/2001; 2001/2002 and 2003/2004) There was a higher proportion of female students on the degree than the proportion of applicants., but in the others academic years the opposite occurred. In the latest 3 academic years (2011/2012 until 2013/2014) it is possible to verify a growing gap between students receiving places on the degree and the number of applications.. It seems that in STH there is a tendency to attract a lower proportion of women over the years, both in terms of applications and those accepted onto the degree. In 2013/2014 the proportion of women was below 0.5% of those accepted onto the degree courses for the first time ever in STH.

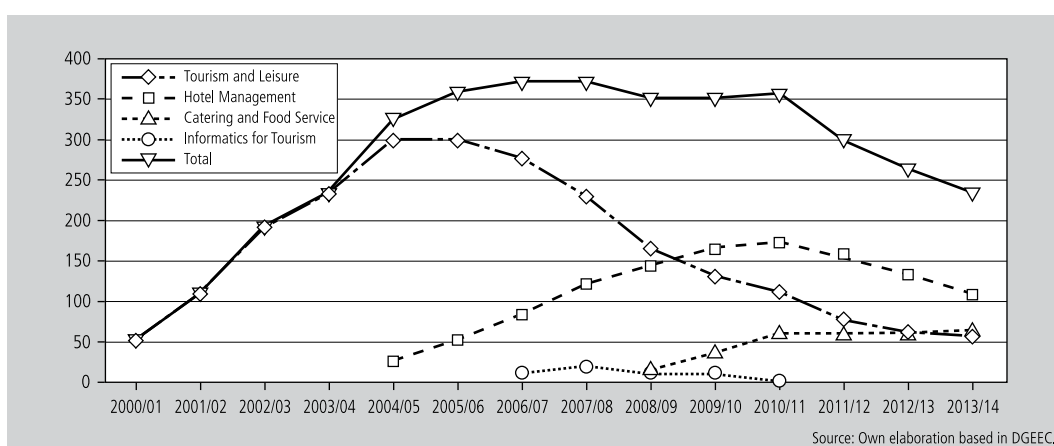


Figure 2 | Applicants per degree and total.

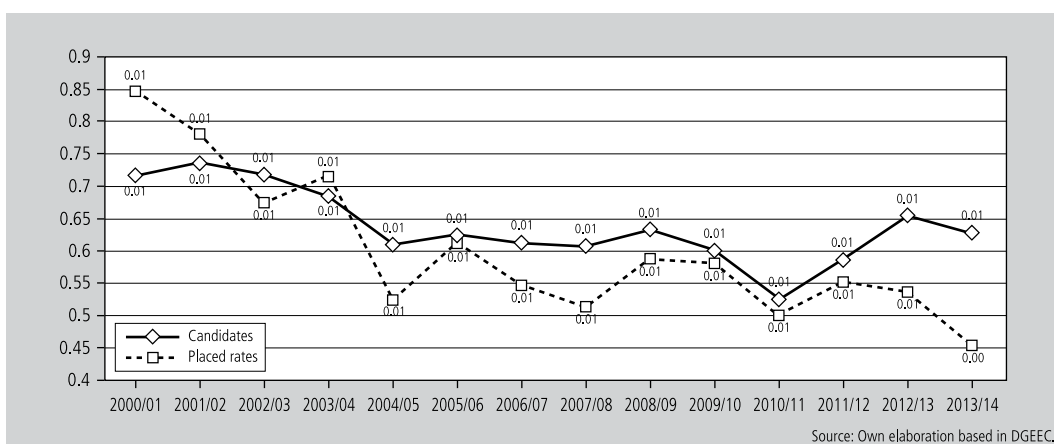


Figure 3 | Candidate and placement rates in STH in the 1st phase (women / total).

Traditionally, degrees in the area of tourism in Portugal are more popular with female students. Figure 4 also demonstrates this through the analysis of data about the percentage difference in applications from men and women from the 1st phase, which is calculated by subtracting the values of the male and female applicants subsequently obtained by dividing the value by the total number of candidates, finally multiplied by 100%. Interestingly, in 2011/2012, for the first time, there were more men applying to the degrees in Hotel Management and Restaurant and Catering and, conversely, the TL degree has the maximum value of 49%, which was the time when it was more chosen by the female gender. It appears that in the last two academic years the demand by female students prevailed again and, interestingly, the value in the 3 degrees is approaching a scale between 20 and 30%.

Since the degree of TL has a higher demand in percentage by women, it was decided to undertake a primary data collection by surveying the 59 students in the 2013-14 academic year. The questionnaire was filled by the three years students in the classroom.

4.2.Primary data analysis

The universe of respondents to the survey includes 34 undergraduate students (58% of the population), 10 were male and 24 were female. The 2nd year is represented with 16 responses (47%), followed by the 3rd year with 10 and the 1st with 8 replies. The female gender is the majority in all years, as noted in figure 5, but it is less representative in the 3rd year (60%). The age is an average of 22 years old, 18 being the minimum and 33 the maximum, both female, which indicates a wide age ranger of female students greater dispersion of the elements by this gender. The majority of students is identified as single (31).

The desire to attend additional training (Figure 6), after graduation (representing 73%), reveals greater interest and was manifested more females (19 - 79%) than males (5 - 56%).

It appears that only 4 respondents are employed (11.8%) and one is of the male gender. Most students have a normal situation so they do not need to combine work with academic study (88.2%).

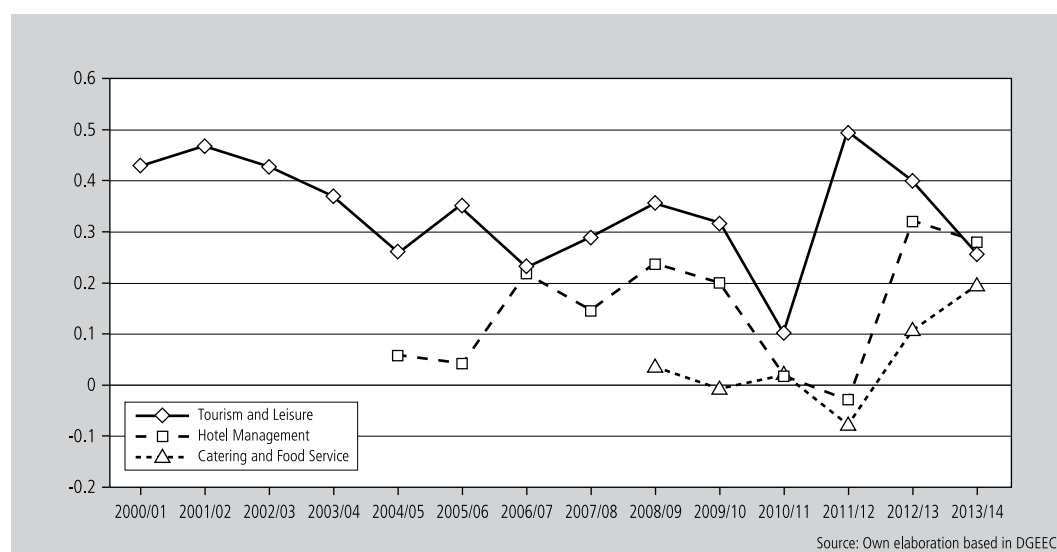


Figure 4 | Percentage difference in gender of the candidates (%women - %men).

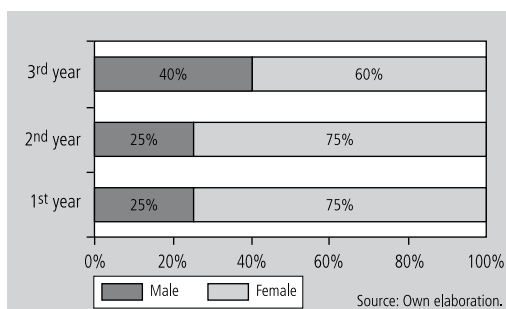


Figure 5 | Distribution of respondents by gender (%).

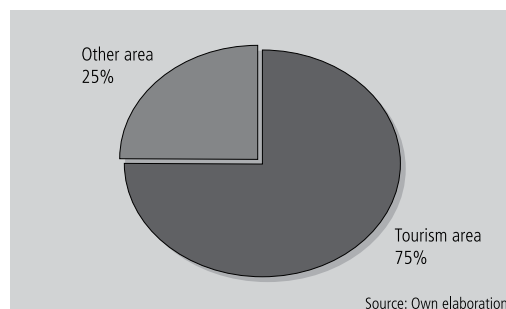


Figure 7 | Branch of activity in which the student works (%).

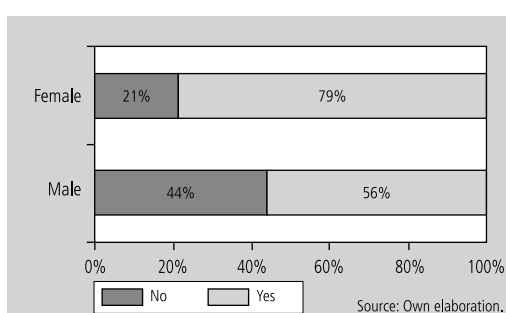


Figure 6 | Frequency of additional training by gender (%).

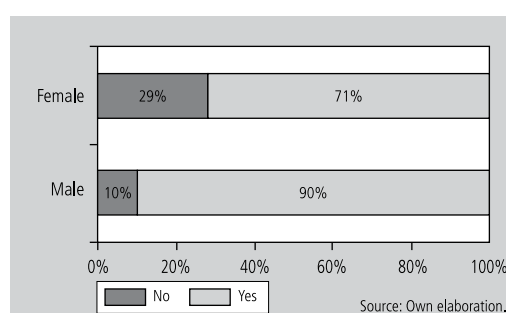


Figure 8 | Interest in creating their own employment / business (%).

It was found that 75% of the employee group (Figure 7) works in a branch of tourism. One works full-time and two work part-time. Half of student workers refer the need to work to pay for their education, to pay other expenses, as well as to gain professional experience. There was only one employed student at the point of entering the degree.

Students expressing an interest in becoming self-employed was approximately 76.5% was expressed by a higher number of males (9-90%) than female (17 - 70.8%), as seen in figure 8. Among the reasons given for desiring self-employment are: aspiring to be "owner / own boss" (1 male); it is a good way to improve economically (1 female); willingness to undertake / innovate / boost (3 males and 9 females); personal / professional fulfilment (3 female). Also important among the motivations is the willingness to undertake, innovate and streamline (70% of the responses), which in tourism can be quite promising in creating new businesses.

With regard to the sector in which the student would like to work, it appears that the majority (95.8%) plans to work in tourism, so the professional vocation could be well targeted. In fact, only one female response indicated another area.

Costa et al. (2011, p. 51) concluded that women's salaries are lower than men's; that the tourism sector is low paid and that women in this sector are particularly underpaid; tourism workers tend to be low-skilled. So these authors think that it "is important to evaluate whether the gender pay gap is due to differences in education between men and women". Regarding the salary that students expect to earn on their first job after graduation, it appears that the 14 females expected remuneration between 475 and 599 euros, 10 expected to be paid between 600 and 899 euros, 5 from 900 to 1199 and only 1 said she expected to receive over 1200 up to 1799 per month. The expectations of students are relatively lower, as shown in the figure 9, with an expected

average salary of around 550 euros from female respondents and 775 euros from males.

Costa et al. (2011, p. 48) conclude that regarding the distribution of leadership positions across tourism sectors, there is an apparent balance between men and women, since both genders, in accommodation services and travel agencies, have a share of 50% in this position, but men represent only 41,4% of accommodation workers. In the F&B sector, the gender imbalance regarding this occupation is remarkable because men are 39,9% of the workforce, but hold 60,3% of all management and executive positions. So they conclude that “it is noticeable that women directors and executives tend to be better skilled than their male counterparts, both in the tourism sector and in the economy as a whole”. This confirms the idea that women have to be better skilled than men to reach the same positions.

In the group of questions about performance with regard to the position in the hierarchy of the organization (Figure 10), where they want to work,

only 5 students have the goal of reaching an administrator or equivalent position, 4 to become a general manager or manager, or assistant manager, 7 as head of service / department / sector, 4 as responsible for project/ work, 7 as senior technician and, finally, 1 is limited to technical functions. In general, more males are likely to act as coordination or supervision workers (90%) compared to females (79.2%).

The difficulties/constraints that affect more women in senior positions (Figure 11) could be, according to respondents: lack of time for family (40% male and 70.8% female); bias / sexism / gender stereotypes (20% male and 50% female); difficulty in maintaining authority / seeing their leadership accepted (40% male and 37.5% female); pressure from male colleagues (30% male and 37.5% female); lack of time for oneself (30% male and 33.3% female); lack of time to devote themselves more to the profession (20.8% female); lack of time for household chores (20.8% female); pressure from

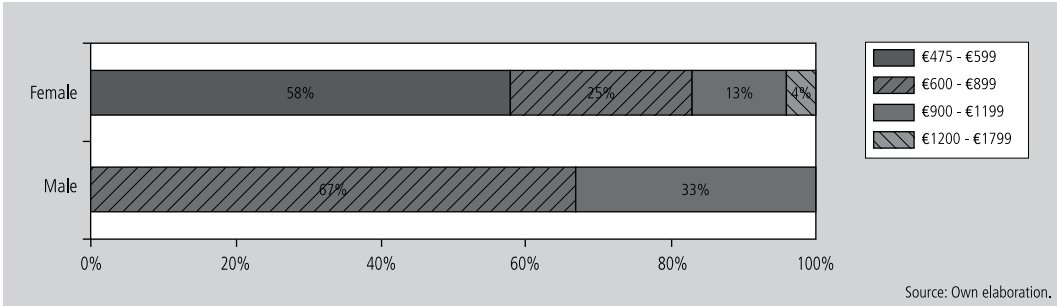


Figure 9 | Salary earning in 1st job after completing the course (%).

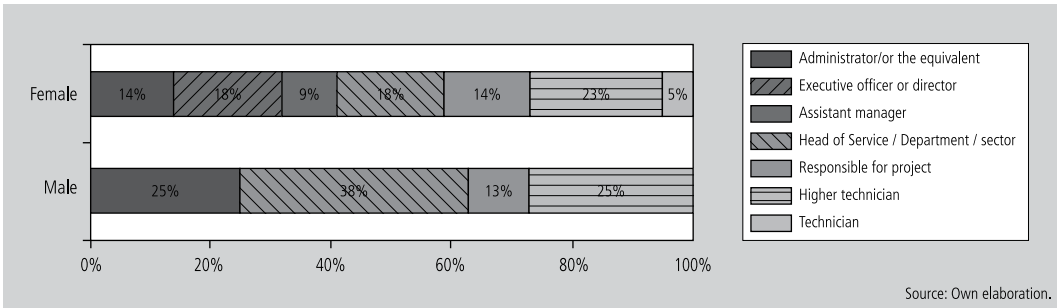


Figure 10 | Hierarchy position in the organisation where they would like to work (%).

female counterparts (30% male and 16.7% female); or another reason, which was indicated by only two respondents of each gender. In general, students expressed being more aware of the difficulties that a senior position can cause to women in terms of family life, social prejudices and seeing their leadership recognized.

The perceptions regarding the performance of management positions reveal that: women dedicate themselves more to education than men (3.85 average and lower standard deviation - 0.958, indicating the similarity of opinions recorded by gender); I prefer to work with men than with women (in terms of interpersonal relationships) with mean 3.71; the average value 3.12 registered on the options - women are better managers than men and there are more conflicts in the organization/company when there are women in positions of leadership or supervision; the world of work is dominated by men who do not have enough confidence in women (3.09); women are better leaders than men (3.06).

In turn, the perceptions of the 10 male respondents, regarding the performance of management positions, reveal that the maximum value indicates

that women devote themselves more to education than men (3.8), while the minimum value has plenty of disagreement (1.8), women are better managers than men; women are better leaders than men, and also trust more in women than in men. These average values of 4 have the lowest standard (0.919) deviation, so that there is greater cohesion in the responses.

When considering women as a group with specific needs, we reflect on the following issues: security issues in business trips worry women more than men (3.35); in terms of employment space, women have their own specific needs in terms of organisation and comfort when compared to men (3.03); there are some tasks that could be more inappropriate for women (2.62). The male respondents recognize the issues of safety in work trips care more women than men (3.70) and women disagree that there are more tasks that are inappropriate for women (2.54). However, these three issues have a strong relationship between the opinions expressed by both genders.

In the group questions about discrimination/perception of (in) equality of opportunity in employment

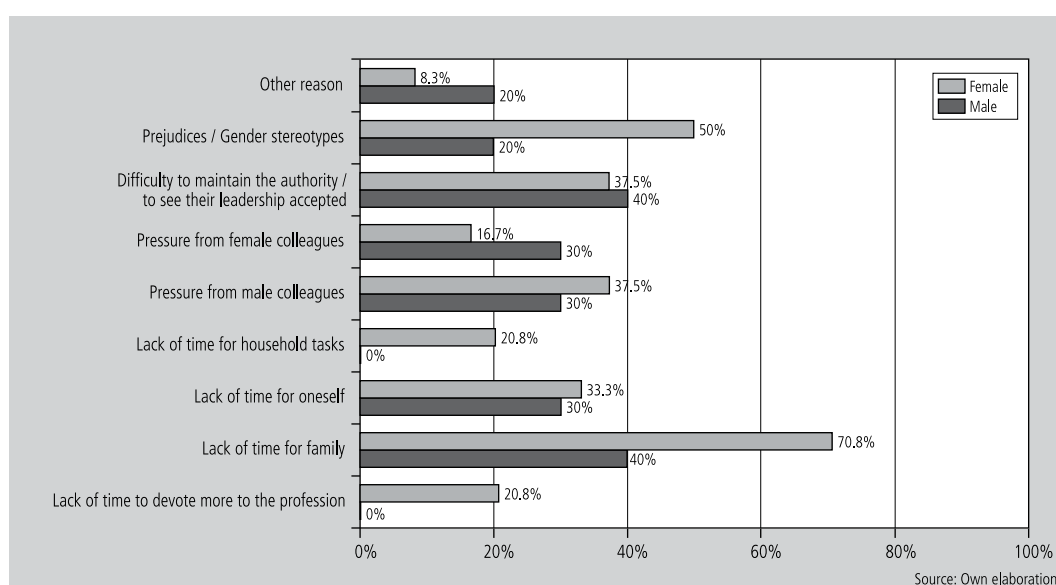


Figure 11 | Difficulties/constraints to affect more women in senior positions (%).

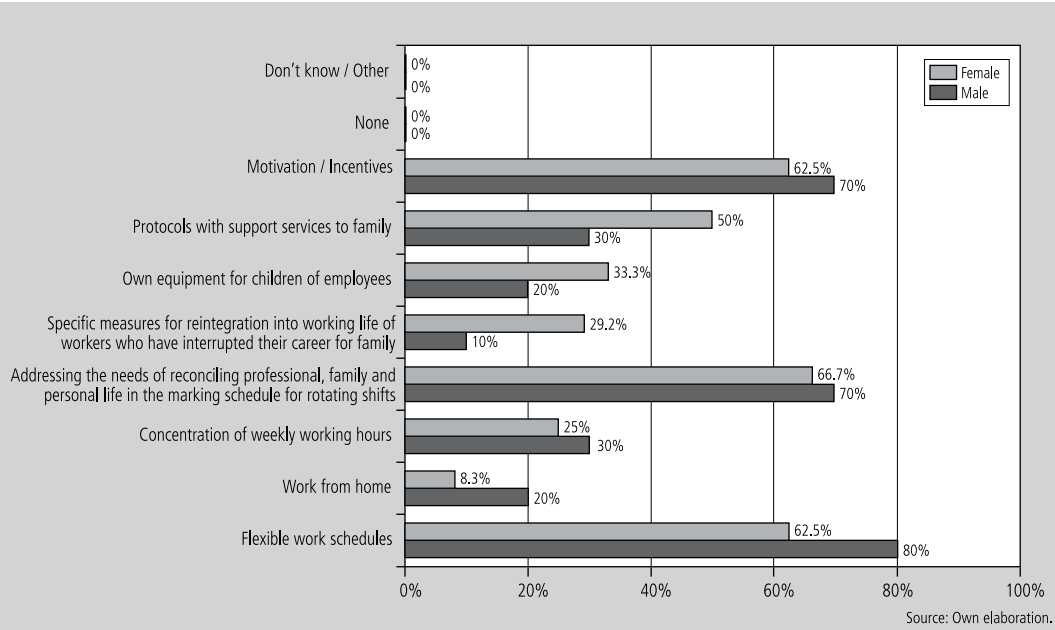


Figure 12 | Measures that organisations can adopt (%).

is noted that, among the measures that organisations can adopt, male respondents highlighted more the issues of flexible work schedules (80% and 62.5%), consideration for the needs of reconciling professional, family and personal life when scheduling rotating shifts (70% and 66.7%) and motivation/incentives (70% and 62.5%). These three questions show an approximate view by both genders, which extends also to others, as shown in figure 12.

In general, it was possible to observe differences of opinions between gender counterparts that will be summarized below.

5. Conclusion

Based on the Global Report on Women in Tourism (OMT, 2011), we can conclude that education is key in five essential areas of intervention. So, we can observe the importance of the valorisation of women's participation in tourism education and

training and the effort to increase the educational level of women working in different areas of this industry. "Tourism opens doors for women" was the theme for the United Nations' World Tourism Day in 2007, in order to increase public awareness of the great opportunities that the tourism sector should provide to women, and it was also especially celebrated in STH.

The analysis of secondary data shows that the relative number weight of STH, in terms of vacancies, have slightly decreased and also the demand by students show values of importance that should be analysed as they could compromise its viability in the future. In figure 3 we observe that there is a general predominance of the female gender in STH, although in 2013/2014 there was an inversion in this trend in placed rates, which could be a fact related To a drop in the proportion or number of female applicants, namely in the TL degree.

The data collected in the degree of TL allows us to see more about the perceptions, opinions and expectations of students about the main issues of

(in)equalities existing in tourism and could help to improve the development plan of STH. The respondents to the survey are 34 undergraduate students and 24 are female. The majority are single (31) and refer that they would like to continue their studies, especially the females (19). There are only 4 Students in employment. On the other hand, it seems that men show more interest in the creation of their own business, which is in line with international trends.

The expectation of students about likely future salary levels are relatively lower, as shown in the figure 9, and the lower expectations are from female respondents, which seems to reflect the sad reality diagnosed by Costa et al. (2011). In terms of the hierarchy position in the organization, we conclude that females have less ambition compared to their male colleagues. The difficulties/constraints that affect a great proportion of women in senior positions are more recognized by females but, in general, we consider that students expressed being more sensitive to the difficulties that a leading position can cause to women in terms of family life, social prejudices and seeing their leadership recognized.

The perceptions regarding the performance of management positions reveal from both groups that because women dedicate themselves more to education and they can become better leaders. In general, there is a strong relationship between the opinions expressed by both genders about the measures that organizations can adopt to promote the equality of opportunities. Academic results show that females who had taken the TL degree had better graduation marks because it seems that they study more than their male colleagues.

The data analysis allows sustaining, with some certainty, the discussion of the hypotheses of a good relationship between the development of the STH education project and the importance of developing gender issues discussions in its strategy. It also seems important to have a national liaison in the HE network in this academic area because of the frailties that affect the STH in the inland of Portugal, mainly in terms of students demand. We observed

that the majority of students are female, although there has been a recently balance (Figure 3), and they present differences in gender perceptions about several issues: the interest of working in the tourism branches, positions preferred in the hierarchy of the organization and also in wages in their future jobs. It seems there is a perception of a wide gender pay gap in the tourism industry because some answers from the students point to the horizontal and vertical segregation that female students expect in their professional future.

The interest of need for women valorisation, for the economic sustainability and competitiveness of an HEI in the area of tourism and hospitality, could be centred in considering the applications of some interesting actions suggested by WTTC (2014) and OMT (2011), as leader entities in these areas. If so, the marketing strategy for STH could also be supported by active policies to promote gender equality based on the knowledge about their role, for example promoting more actions to promote female entrepreneurship, and linking the tourism education skills to the employment opportunities better. In the regional context, we suggest more cooperation and communication between all HEI and better management of human resources in order to dignify both genders in all sectors of the tourism industry. This could be an interesting challenge for the network of education and research that has been built for HE in Tourism.

The results shows similar ideas and expectations from the TL degree students about the barriers to equality, when compared with the inequalities referred to by Costa et al. (2011). These could be created by the traditional vertical and horizontal segregation in employment, lower employment rates for women, as well as more precarious employment situations. By the analysis of the reality it seems urgent to promote a better image and practice by the HEIs and also by the tourism industry in Portugal, minimizing gender gap inequalities.

We recognize the limitations of the survey sample because it concentrates only in one degree,

with few students, and in the future could try to get data from all the degrees of an HEI to create a more solid base to recommend some good ideas for its marketing plan. In terms of future lines of study, we could suggest a comparison to other areas of study in relation to demand and placement of students and also on how to see the gender issue; the very small sample size which limits the analysis done and the conclusions that can be drawn, which could be increased through a longitudinal study (annual or biannual in the next 10 years) or supplemented with a qualitative approach or even by comparison with results from other schools or cycles of studies.

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