

Barriers and enablers: Review research on women entrepreneurship and its impact on sustainable tourism development

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ABSTRACT

Objective: People often glorify the tourism industry as a gateway for entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly for women. However, its structural inequalities remain largely unaddressed. While women play a significant role in tourism entrepreneurship, systemic barriers constrain their participation, including limited access to capital, restrictive social norms, and gendered labour segmentation. Existing research primarily frames empowerment in financial terms, neglecting broader socio-cultural and structural constraints. Feminist critiques of tourism entrepreneurship remain marginal, creating gaps in academic inquiry, and policy interventions.

Research Design & Methods: We conducted an integrative literature review, systematically examining research on gender, tourism, and entrepreneurship through a dual analytic approach incorporating inductive and deductive coding (Donthu *et al.*, 2021). Using the PRISMA framework, we synthesised high-impact literature to identify thematic patterns, research gaps, and structural constraints affecting women entrepreneurs in tourism.

Findings: Findings reveal persistent gender disparities, particularly in financial accessibility, decision-making power, and policy design. The thematic analysis highlights key dimensions such as gender inclusivity, sustainable tourism, and feminist entrepreneurship, advocating for an intersectional approach that incorporates gender-sensitive frameworks into tourism research (Cobo *et al.*, 2015).

Implications & Recommendations: Policy recommendations emerging from this study include targeted funding mechanisms, comprehensive training and mentorship programs, and regulatory reforms designed to support women-led enterprises in sustainable tourism. By integrating feminist perspectives into tourism entrepreneurship discourse, this research advances theoretical understanding while offering actionable recommendations for policymakers. Addressing gendered barriers in tourism entrepreneurship is critical for achieving sustainable development goals and fostering inclusive economic growth.

Contribution & Value Added: This study's originality lies in its integrative application of feminist perspectives to critically analyse gendered barriers in tourism entrepreneurship. By employing a dual analytic approach and emphasising intersectional insights, it offers a nuanced understanding of structural inequalities and actionable policy recommendations for sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

Article type: research article

Keywords: women's entrepreneurship; gender and tourism; sustainable tourism; gender inclusivity; sustainable development goals (SDGs); economic empowerment

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INTRODUCTION

Scholars perceive the tourism sector as a favourable to entrepreneurial activities due to the comparatively easy access to the industry and the presence of numerous small enterprises (Nikraftar & Hosseini, 2016; Robert & Brown, 1998). Women entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in fostering sustainable tourism but they often encounter significant challenges that hinder their contributions. These

challenges include limited access to financial resources, social stereotypes, and gender-based discrimination, which collectively undermine their entrepreneurial potential in the tourism sector (Freund & Hernandez-Maskivker, 2021). However, the potential for women to drive sustainable tourism initiatives is substantial, as evidenced by their ability to leverage social capital and community networks to overcome these obstacles (Kutlu & Ngoasong, 2023). According to the World Tourism Organisation (2019), the United Nations acknowledges that tourism has the potential to empower women via the creation of income-generating possibilities within various scales of tourist enterprises. Mosedale (2014) highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of tourism's role in economic empowerment, emphasising that the industry continues to reinforce gendered norms. While it is often depicted as a diverse, dynamic, and flexible industry with such potential, it is crucial to recognise that tourism still perpetuates gendered norms (Peeters & Ateljevic, 2017). This is evident in the provision of temporary and part-time employment opportunities that align with traditional gender roles and skills. Consequently, this perpetuates disparities in the allocation of work.

The prevailing narrative tends to equate empowerment with financial independence, often overlooking broader socio-cultural and structural factors. The literature indicates that women entrepreneurs in tourism are not only key to economic growth but also achieving broader social objectives such as gender equality and community development (Abou-Shouk *et al.*, 2021). The extant literature highlights that women-led tourism initiatives can enhance local economies while promoting cultural preservation and environmental sustainability (Ali *et al.*, 2024). The role of social entrepreneurship is particularly significant, as it emphasises the integration of social goals with business practices, thereby aligning with sustainable tourism principles (Aquino *et al.*, 2018). The concept of tourism entrepreneurship requires reframing to move beyond a masculinist economic perspective that overlooks the complexities of women's experiences in the industry. According to Cole (2018), adopting this approach will enhance comprehension of how entrepreneurs see and navigate the opportunities and limitations associated with entrepreneurship, going beyond the conventional narratives of globalisation and capitalism. In a broader context, the significant promise and potential impact of tourism entrepreneurship are widely acknowledged. However, feminist theoretical critiques, which aim to challenge the subordinate status of women entrepreneurs to their male counterparts, have not been adequately incorporated into the field of tourism research, despite their emergence within the broader entrepreneurial scholarship.

Within the extensive body of literature on entrepreneurship, scholars observed that the presence of a gendered bias permeates discussions around entrepreneurship. This prejudice manifests in the perception of women entrepreneurs as being of lesser importance and lacking in contrast to their male counterparts. The existence of a hierarchical gendered structure has given rise to several research and policy initiatives that seek to address the perceived limitations faced by women in their abilities to participate in entrepreneurial activities and contribute to innovation and wealth generation (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). In the context of tourism entrepreneurship, male entrepreneurs outperform their female counterparts (Henry *et al.*, 2016; Swail & Marlow, 2018). Hence, it is imperative to provide support and aid to women to fully harness the transformative capabilities of entrepreneurship. As a result, the scholarly debate on tourism entrepreneurship has failed to critically examine the fundamental assumptions regarding gender, while simultaneously highlighting the possibilities for empowerment that entrepreneurship offers to women.

In addition to the persistent gender biases within tourism entrepreneurship, several critical research gaps hinder a comprehensive understanding of the barriers and enablers affecting women entrepreneurs and their role in sustainable tourism development. While women's role in sustainable tourism is increasingly acknowledged, existing research often focuses narrowly on economic empowerment, overlooking structural and socio-cultural barriers. Moreover, feminist and intersectional perspectives remain underutilised in tourism entrepreneurship studies. This review addresses these gaps by critically examining the barriers and enablers shaping women's entrepreneurial participation through a gender-informed lens. Despite the recognition of gender disparities, structural factors, such as literacy and education, have received inadequate attention, despite their substantial influence on the entrepreneurial engagement of women (Gebbels *et al.*, 2020). The capacity of women to secure employment and effectively manage tourism-related enterprises is often hindered by illiteracy and low educational attain-

ment, which frequently arise from familial responsibilities (Ali *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, the sector's diversity of occupational opportunities is restricted by cultural stereotypes that perpetuate traditional gender roles. This is particularly true in environments where male-dominated norms discourage women from participating in entrepreneurial activities, as the absence of comprehensive support systems, both within professional networks and societal structures, exacerbates these challenges. Financial constraints continue to be a significant obstacle, as women encounter challenges in obtaining the credit, financing, and investment opportunities that are essential for the expansion of their businesses (Dutta & Mallick, 2023). Furthermore, despite the introduction of gender-based policies to encourage women's entrepreneurship, there is a scarcity of research that assesses their practical efficacy. Another underexplored area is the transformative potential of technology as an enabler for women entrepreneurs, particularly in terms of how digital tools can improve market access and business scalability (Swartz *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, the research on tourism entrepreneurship has not sufficiently incorporated intersectionality, which refers to the compounded effects of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geographic location. Finally, the relationship between environmental sustainability and women's entrepreneurship is a developing research frontier, as few studies investigate how women contribute to sustainable tourism practices (Makandwa & de Klerk, 2024). The objective of this article was to address these deficiencies by critically analysing the barriers and enablers of women's entrepreneurship in tourism, evaluating the effectiveness of policy, and emphasising the role of technology and sustainability in the development of inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems. This study offers a novel contribution by integrating feminist theory into a systematic review of women's entrepreneurship in sustainable tourism – an area where such perspectives are still limited. Unlike earlier reviews that focus primarily on economic outcomes, this research adopted a gender-sensitive lens to examine structural barriers, intersectional challenges, and enabling factors. Through its conceptual focus and policy-oriented insights, the study advances a more inclusive and theoretically grounded understanding of tourism entrepreneurship. We aimed to enhance the understanding of gender dynamics in the context of tourist entrepreneurship. This will enable policymakers and governing bodies to develop more effective policies that address the specific challenges faced by entrepreneurs. Ultimately, our research sought to contribute to ongoing policy discussions surrounding tourism entrepreneurship. While previous studies have explored entrepreneurship in the tourist sector (Li, 2008; Solvoll *et al.*, 2015), our focus was to emphasise the importance of addressing gender-related concerns within this context. To achieve this objective, we conducted an integrative review to critically examine the literature on gender, tourism, and entrepreneurship. The remainder of the article is organized into five sections. The next section presents the Literature Review and Hypotheses Development, followed by the Research Methodology. The Results and Discussion section elaborates on the key insights derived from the analysis, and the paper concludes with the Conclusions, highlighting the main implications and directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent research has drawn attention to the critical role of women entrepreneurs in tourism and their alignment with the fifth UN Sustainable Development Goal, gender equality, highlighting the intricate links between entrepreneurship, shared value creation, and women's empowerment (Bagheri *et al.*, 2023). These studies highlight not only the transformative potential of women entrepreneurship but also the barriers arising from gender-based discrimination, underscoring the need for a theoretical framework that critically engages with power, identity, and agency. Feminist theory offers a lens, enabling researchers to examine the socio-political structures that shape women's entrepreneurial experiences. Within entrepreneurship research, literature highlights that gender is not merely a variable to be measured but a fundamental axis along which we construct entrepreneurial identities and opportunities (Freund & Hernandez-Maskivker, 2021). However, in tourism literature, feminist critiques remain marginal. A growing body of feminist tourism research advocates intersectionality as a core analytical tool, emphasising how gender interacts with class, ethnicity, and geography to shape entrepreneurial pathways (Kharbanda & Sharma, 2024). Ecofeminist approaches further expand this discourse by linking women entrepreneurship with environmental stewardship and

community resilience, particularly in rural and marginalised settings. These perspectives view tourism not only as an economic activity but as a site of potential resistance to entrenched patriarchal norms. Hence, feminist theoretical frameworks deepen the analysis of empowerment beyond economic metrics, advocating for inclusive, sustainable, and context-sensitive approaches to entrepreneurship. Integrating such theoretical underpinnings is essential for reimagining tourism as a domain of equitable participation and structural transformation (Gerged *et al.*, 2022).

This study employs an integrated theoretical framework, drawing on feminist theory, intersectionality, and the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) to analyse the challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in sustainable tourism. Feminist theory examines how patriarchal structures systematically marginalise women in entrepreneurship. It critiques conventional economic models that overlook women's agency, unpaid labour, and systemic exclusion from financial resources, markets, and policy influence. Within tourism, feminist theory highlights how women's entrepreneurial endeavours serve not only as economic activities but also as acts of empowerment and social transformation (Golik & Wasilczuk, 2025). The intersectionality framework acknowledges the diversity of women's experiences, emphasising how factors such as race, class, ethnicity, and geographic location intersect with gender to create unique entrepreneurial pathways. This perspective allows for analysis of how privilege and disadvantage shape women's participation in tourism, revealing why some women face greater barriers than others (Dy & MacNeil, 2025).

We incorporated the theory of planned behaviour (Taghavi & Maharati, 2024), which explores the psychological drivers behind entrepreneurial actions. According to TPB, a woman's decision to engage in tourism entrepreneurship is influenced by three key factors: her attitudes (*e.g.*, confidence, perceived benefits), subjective norms (*e.g.*, societal expectations, familial support), and perceived behavioural control (*e.g.*, access to skills, funding, and networks). By integrating TPB, the study bridges structural constraints with individual agency, demonstrating how internalised beliefs and external pressures collectively shape women's entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours.

Together, these theories offer a comprehensive framework, addressing systemic inequities, identity-based disparities, and cognitive-motivational factors, to better understand women's roles in driving sustainable tourism development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A systematic and structured review strategy is essential for simplifying complex research areas, particularly when exploring the multifaceted relationship between women's entrepreneurship and sustainable tourism development. We employed an integrative literature review approach, designed to synthesise diverse perspectives from existing research while identifying recurring patterns, key themes, and critical gaps. By combining qualitative and quantitative studies, the study offers a holistic understanding of the barriers and enablers influencing women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector.

The integrative review is characterised as a separate strategy for synthesising research on a certain topic. Combining data from diversely designed projects is challenging and complicated, but a disciplined and comprehensive approach to the process, especially data processing, reduces biases and errors (Souza *et al.*, 2010). We employed a two-tiered analytic approach, integrating manual and software-based analysis, resulting in an integrated literature review (Bansal *et al.*, 2022; Nangia *et al.*, 2023; Rao *et al.*, 2023; Rialti *et al.*, 2019; Sharma *et al.*, 2023, Taheri *et al.*, 2023). The integrated review aims to overcome some constraints associated with narrative techniques by conducting a more comprehensive and structured literature search. The primary aim of integrative reviews is to systematically analyse, evaluate, and amalgamate pertinent scholarly works to provide novel theoretical frameworks and viewpoints (Cronin & George, 2023; Torraco, 2016). It facilitates enhanced adherence to the standards of systematic reviews, which rely on a replicable, systematic, and transparent methodology (Kraus *et al.*, 2020).

Data Collection Protocol

We developed a research-driven policy agenda, followed by a manual examination. Performing and reporting research publications, we adhered to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic

Reviews and Meta-Analyses) criteria, as shown in Figure 1 (Sharma *et al.*, 2023 & Verma *et al.*, 2023). We selected the Web of Science (WoS) as the primary database for this integrative review due to its rigorous indexing standards, multidisciplinary coverage, and wide acceptance in systematic review research (Donthu *et al.*, 2021). Compared to other well-established databases, WoS offers greater control over data quality, ensuring that only peer-reviewed, high-impact journal articles are included – an essential criterion given the focus on literature from A-ranked ABDC or 3-rated ABS journals. We utilised the WOS database's advanced search function to get 1268 publications using the keywords 'sustainable,' 'tourism,' and 'women.' Next, we filtered the documents based on management, public administration, business, environmental studies, green sustainable science technology, economics, and business finance subject categories, to obtain only documents related to economics, business, and sustainable finance, following the study topic, leaving 571 documents. Moreover, we filtered the articles to maintain just those written in English, which is widely acknowledged. We retained only review and journal articles. Later, we manually filtered the articles to acquire only documents relevant to the interconnection of sustainable tourism and eco-tourism, bringing the total number of papers to 286. To preserve the quality criteria of the reviewed article, we retained only those articles published in journals graded A or above on the ABDC 2019 list or three or higher on the ABS 2021 list, leaving us with 68 articles (Jena, 2021).

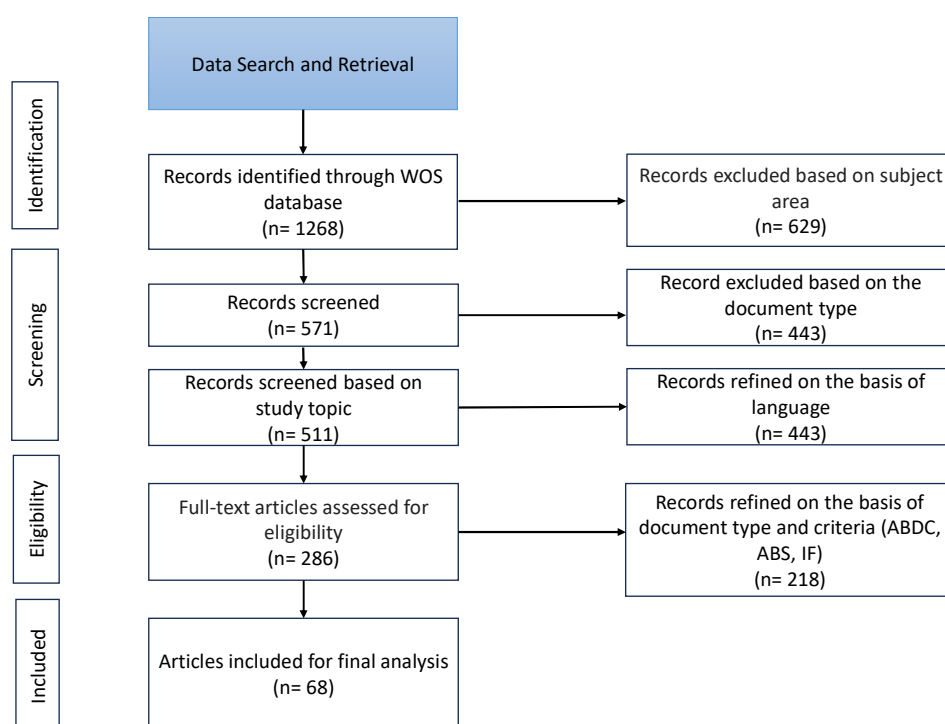


Figure 1. Study flow diagram using PRISMA

Source: own elaboration.

We adopted a robust methodology that integrated both inductive and deductive coding to analyse the data. First, we employed the inductive approach, uncovering themes and constructs through recurring patterns observed in the literature. These overarching dimensions were essential for exploring the relationship between innovation and entrepreneurship (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). To further enhance the analysis, we developed a strategic map to visualise the interconnections between themes related to tourism and women entrepreneurship. This map facilitated systematic data organisation and highlighted critical areas for future research (Hoon & Baluch, 2020). The dual approach incorporated both participant-driven and researcher-driven perspectives, ensuring a holistic analysis. The process began with an informed performance analysis (Donthu *et al.*, 2021; Kent *et al.*, 2020), followed by an in-depth qualitative review. The strategic map (Figure 4) served to identify overarching themes and streamline the analytical process, ultimately revealing emergent patterns and themes that

deepened the understanding of the topic. Using the integrated analysis, we gathered data on the publishing and citation (Figure 2). In the second step, we comprehensively evaluated these articles and separated the literature on sustainable tourism and eco-tourism into significant concepts and themes (Figure 3), and we proposed a conceptual framework (Figure 5).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion, beginning with an analysis of annual publication trends, keyword co-occurrence, and a thematic map-based inductive analysis. It explores dimensions, themes, and constructs within the knowledge field to provide deeper insights into women entrepreneurship, tourism, and sustainable tourism.

Annual Publication Trend of Women Entrepreneurship, Tourism, and Sustainable Tourism

The progression of articles concerning women's entrepreneurship, tourism, and sustainable tourism, arranged in a chronological sequence (Figure 2). The publication trend has transformed, with the number of annual articles transitioning from 1-2 between 1993 and 2013 to 8 in the year 2022. Notably, there is a conspicuous upsurge in publications post-2012. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held on June 20-22, 2012, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, coincides with this significant transition. As an expansion of the Millennium Development Goals, the member states agreed during this meeting to begin work on a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to extend and concur with the post-2015 development agenda (United Nations, 2012).

We may attribute the zenith of publications 2022 to the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), coupled with the UN's declaration designating the year 2002 as the International Year of Eco-tourism. This proclamation rendered the topic exceptionally promising, holding significant potential for expansion. This initiative notably underscored the significance of integrating sustainable development within the realm of tourism.

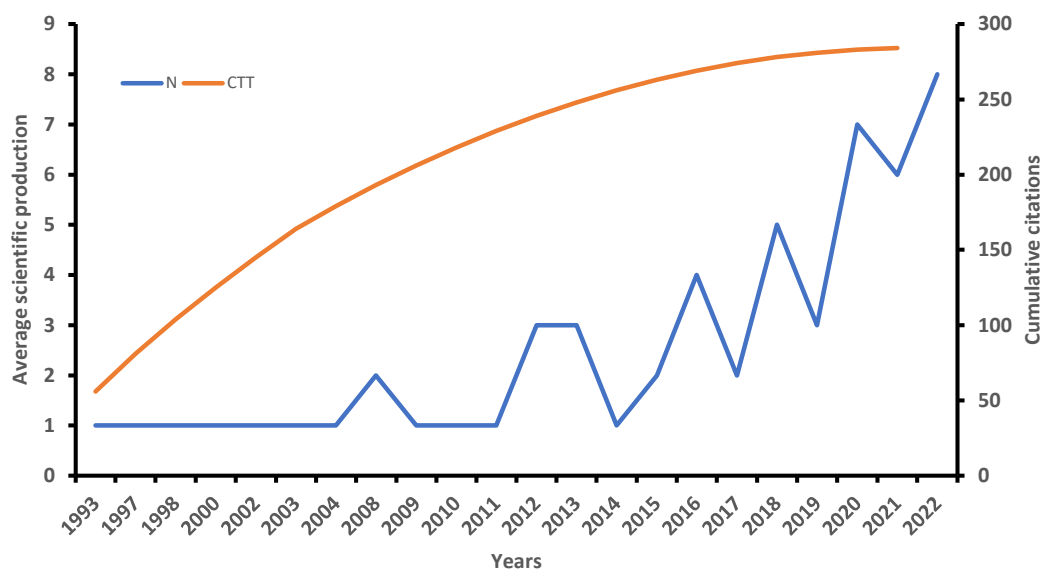


Figure 3. Aggregate dimensions, themes, and constructs in the knowledge field of gender, entrepreneurship
Source: own elaboration.

Inductive and Thematic Analysis

This segment delves into the inductive analysis that is created based on a thematic map-based fashion.

Dimensions, Themes, and Constructs in the Knowledge Field

Inductive analysis identifies five aggregate dimensions (AD), consolidating diverse features into higher-level concepts to uncover underlying patterns. These dimensions not only advance academic

understanding but also guide future research. In hospitality and tourism, thematic mapping (Figure 3) highlights connections among these dimensions. This top-down approach, applicable across disciplines, organises data around predefined dimensions, enabling the identification of relationships and patterns often missed by traditional methods. Overlaying data on a map, it reveals spatial trends, patterns, and variations, enhancing comprehension.

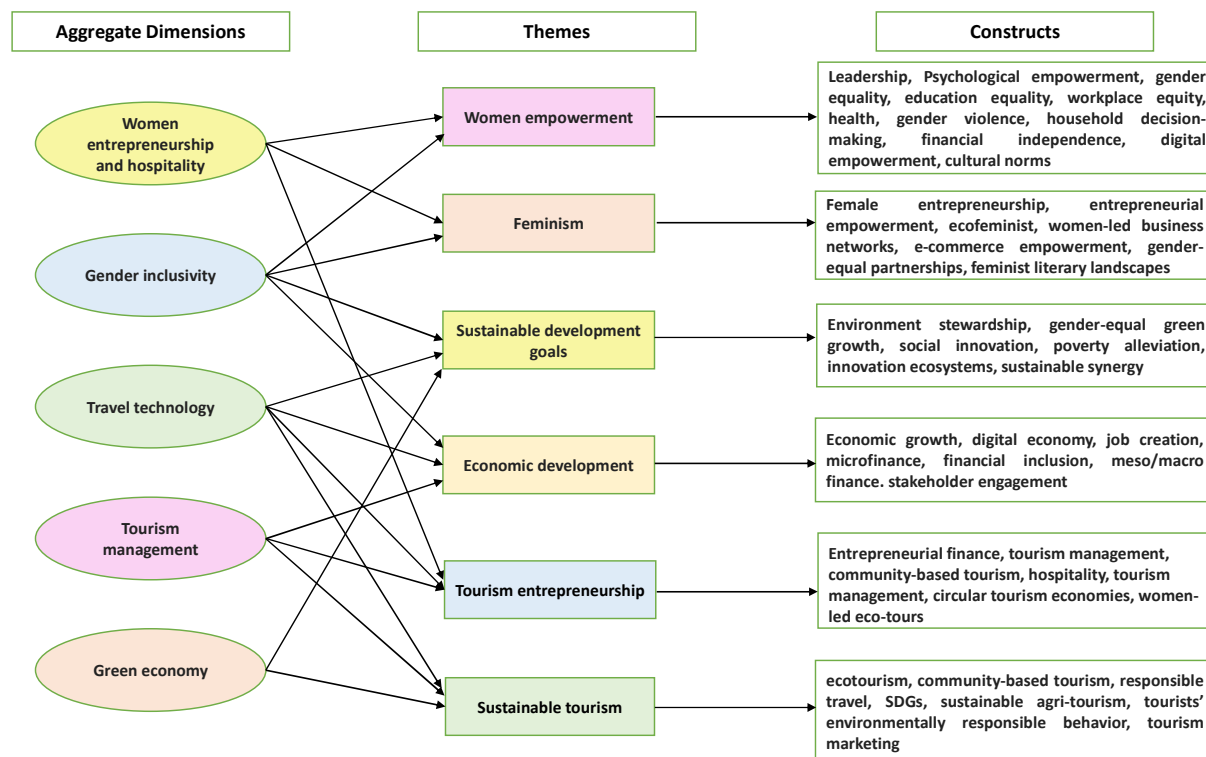


Figure 3. Aggregate dimensions, themes, and constructs in the knowledge field of gender, entrepreneurship, and sustainable tourism

Source: own elaboration.

Drawing from the literature, we identified five overarching themes that illustrate the role of women entrepreneurship and sustainable tourism, derived from aggregate dimensions. Delving into sub-themes such as 'motor,' 'basic,' 'niche,' and 'emergent' provides deeper insights into future research directions. These sub-themes enrich qualitative research by offering a nuanced understanding of data complexity and diversity, allowing researchers to analyse individual phenomena within a conceptual framework. This comprehensive method expands our understanding of the dynamic relationship between robotics, service automation, and the evolving tourism and hospitality landscape.

The elements within the study form the foundation for conceptualising the framework. They are drawn from commonalities identified in the analysis of existing literature's conceptual structure, further reinforced by inductive analysis (Figure 3). The framework is built upon five components that elucidate the concept of women's entrepreneurship and its interconnectedness. The initial component, labelled the Green Economy, encompasses sustainable tourism, economic development, and sustainable development goals. The subsequent component, focusing on women's entrepreneurship and hospitality, encompasses women's empowerment, feminism, and tourism entrepreneurship. The third component, gender inclusivity, is comprised of women's empowerment, economic development, sustainable development goals, and feminism. The fourth component, tourism management, includes sustainable tourism, economic development, and tourism entrepreneurship. Lastly, travel technology consists of sustainable tourism, economic development, sustainable development goals, and tourism entrepreneurship.

The 'green economy' emphasises sustainable development through responsible resource management and social equity, areas where women's entrepreneurship plays a critical role. In tourism, women often lead initiatives prioritising sustainability, community welfare, and environmental stewardship.

Their participation is particularly impactful in rural and marginalised areas, where it enhances cultural preservation and strengthens agriculture-tourism linkages, fostering economic growth and sustainability (Kutlu & Ngoasong, 2023). The study highlights how initiatives, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs targeting women's empowerment, have successfully promoted sustainability in regions like Nigeria's oil-producing areas. Women represent nearly 40% of the tourism workforce, with hospitality being a major employer, and their leadership in adopting eco-friendly practices helps attract environmentally conscious travellers and boosts market access and consumer loyalty (Uduji *et al.*, 2020). Integrating gender perspectives into green economy strategies further enhances the effectiveness of sustainability efforts, showcasing the potential for women-led businesses to drive sustainable development within the tourism and hospitality sectors.

'Women's entrepreneurship in hospitality' has emerged as a critical area of study, especially in the context of sustainable tourism development. The study significantly contributes to economic growth while advancing gender equality and empowerment. Their familiarity with hospitality-related tasks often leads to successful homestay ventures, food services, and local crafts (Yoopetch, 2021). This sector provides unique opportunities for women due to its informal roles, but challenges such as limited resources, societal stereotypes, and inadequate support networks persist. The extant literature highlights that the theme is often driven by necessity rather than opportunity, especially in developing regions where economic hardships push women to create businesses (Dutta, 2023). The theory of planned behaviour highlights the importance of fostering positive attitudes toward risk-taking and creating supportive environments to encourage entrepreneurial intentions (Figuerola-Domecq *et al.*, 2022). Social capital, including trust and community support, also plays a vital role in overcoming barriers. Beyond individual empowerment, women-led hospitality businesses align with sustainable tourism principles by emphasising social and environmental priorities. Initiatives in ecotourism and cultural tourism promote economic benefits, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability, making women's entrepreneurship integral to achieving broader sustainable tourism goals (Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2016a).

The theme of 'gender inclusivity' is pivotal in advancing women's entrepreneurship and involvement in tourism, particularly in the context of sustainable tourism development. It emphasises equitable opportunities, fair representation, and empowerment for women in an industry where traditional gender roles often limit their participation. Tourism policies that promote gender-sensitive work conditions and leadership opportunities can enhance women's economic empowerment and foster balanced decision-making, contributing to more effective sustainability initiatives (Domecq *et al.*, 2015). Achieving true inclusivity requires considering the intersectionality of gender with other social categories like race and sexuality. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) also plays a vital role by empowering women through community-focused initiatives, especially in cultural tourism, where women's participation boosts community engagement and economic development (Uduji *et al.*, 2020). Gender inclusivity extends beyond empowerment as it shapes organisational culture and operational success in hospitality and tourism. Neglecting gender equality can hinder leadership development and diversity within the industry, reducing the overall effectiveness of tourism enterprises. Integrating gender theory into tourism research offers valuable insights into women's experiences, enabling more sensitive and effective management practices (Elena, 2023). Fostering inclusivity enhances organisational performance while contributing to broader societal goals of equality and diversity (Kutlu & Ngoasong, 2023).

The rapid advancement of information and communication technologies (ICT) has revolutionised 'tourism management' by enhancing operational efficiency and improving customer experiences. Smart tourism applications facilitate value co-creation between travellers and service providers, boosting satisfaction and engagement while optimizing resource use and minimizing waste. However, inclusivity requires prioritisation to ensure that all demographics, including women and marginalised groups, benefit from these technological advancements. Women entrepreneurs are pivotal in tourism management, particularly in emerging destinations where small tourism firms (STFs) contribute to economic and social empowerment (Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2016a). Women-led STFs generate income, create jobs, and promote community development, which is vital for regions affected by crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Sanuja & Joseph, 2022). Recognising women as essential

stakeholders in tourism planning can address gender-specific challenges, ensuring equitable and inclusive development. Effective tourism management aligns with sustainable practices by balancing economic, social, and environmental objectives (Petkova, 2023). Strategic planning that involves local communities and raises women's awareness in ecotourism management is crucial for promoting active participation in sustainability initiatives (Streimikiene *et al.*, 2021). Collaborative networks and supportive policies can further enhance women's human capital and resilience, strengthening their businesses' sustainability. Leadership styles significantly influence tourism enterprises' success. Empowering leadership fosters collaboration and inclusivity, enhancing employee outcomes and improving the effectiveness of management strategies, particularly in contexts where women's participation is critical for achieving sustainable results (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2019). Integrating women's perspectives into tourism management ensures holistic, inclusive, and sustainable tourism development that benefits economies and communities alike.

'Travel technology' has revolutionised the tourism industry, impacting stakeholders such as travellers, tourism enterprises, and destinations. Innovations in technology have created integrated service ecosystems, enabling value co-creation and enhancing the travel experience at all stages. Leadership plays a vital role in facilitating the adoption of technologies that improve operational efficiency and traveller support (Buhalis, 2020). The use of smartphones and mobile applications has transformed how travellers access information and engage with travel networks, significantly influencing behaviour and decision-making (Wang, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated technological adoption, driving digital entrepreneurship and advancing trends such as smart tourism destinations, where technology enhances traveller experiences (Shin *et al.*, 2022). Mobile technology remains integral to the traveller's journey, providing essential support before, during, and after travel (Tussyadiah & Wang, 2016). Destination marketers now rely on travel technologies to deliver real-time content and cater to spontaneous travel behaviours, particularly in reaching specific segments like senior travellers (Otoo *et al.*, 2020). Emerging technologies such as blockchain, wearable computing, and augmented reality are reshaping tourism by improving transparency, integrity, and visitor experiences in destinations and museums (Zhang & Yuriy, 2021; Conyette, 2015). Despite advances, the hospitality sector lags behind airlines in adopting technology-enabled services, though ICT remains key to enhancing e-business efficiency (Wang & Sparks, 2014). The growing importance of smart tourism destinations highlights the interconnectedness of people and technology as part of a socio-technical ecosystem (Boes *et al.*, 2016). Big data, the Internet of Things, and cloud computing have disrupted traditional travel agency models, influencing traveller behaviour and market operations. Mobile technologies bridge the supplier-user gap, transforming travel behaviours and perceptions of destination satisfaction (Linton & Kwortnik, 2019). However, future research should explore traveller experiences with technology beyond attitudes and adoption patterns to capture *the broader impacts of these innovations* (Wang *et al.*, 2017).

Thematic Map

A strategic map is a visual depiction presenting essential ideas within a broader framework. When analysing thematic maps, the main metrics are centrality and density (Cobo *et al.*, 2015b). Density reflects how interconnected ideas are within a particular subject, while centrality gauges the extent to which ideas outside that theme are linked to ideas within it. Centrality indicates the level of association a theme has with other themes, while density signifies the strength of internal connections within the themes (Ameen *et al.*, 2022; Aparicio *et al.*, 2019; Shahzad *et al.*, 2022). The basic theme, the rising theme, the niche theme, and the motor theme make up the four sections of the thematic map (Talan & Sharma, 2019). The thematic mapping reveals six distinct themes distributed across the four quadrants: the pivotal theme, exhibiting high centrality and density, is situated in the upper right quadrant; the peripheral theme, showcasing high density but low centrality, is positioned in the upper left quadrant; the emerging or fading theme, characterised by low density and centrality, is found in the lower left quadrant; and the cross-cutting, universal, or fundamental theme, characterised by low density and high centrality, is located in the lower right.

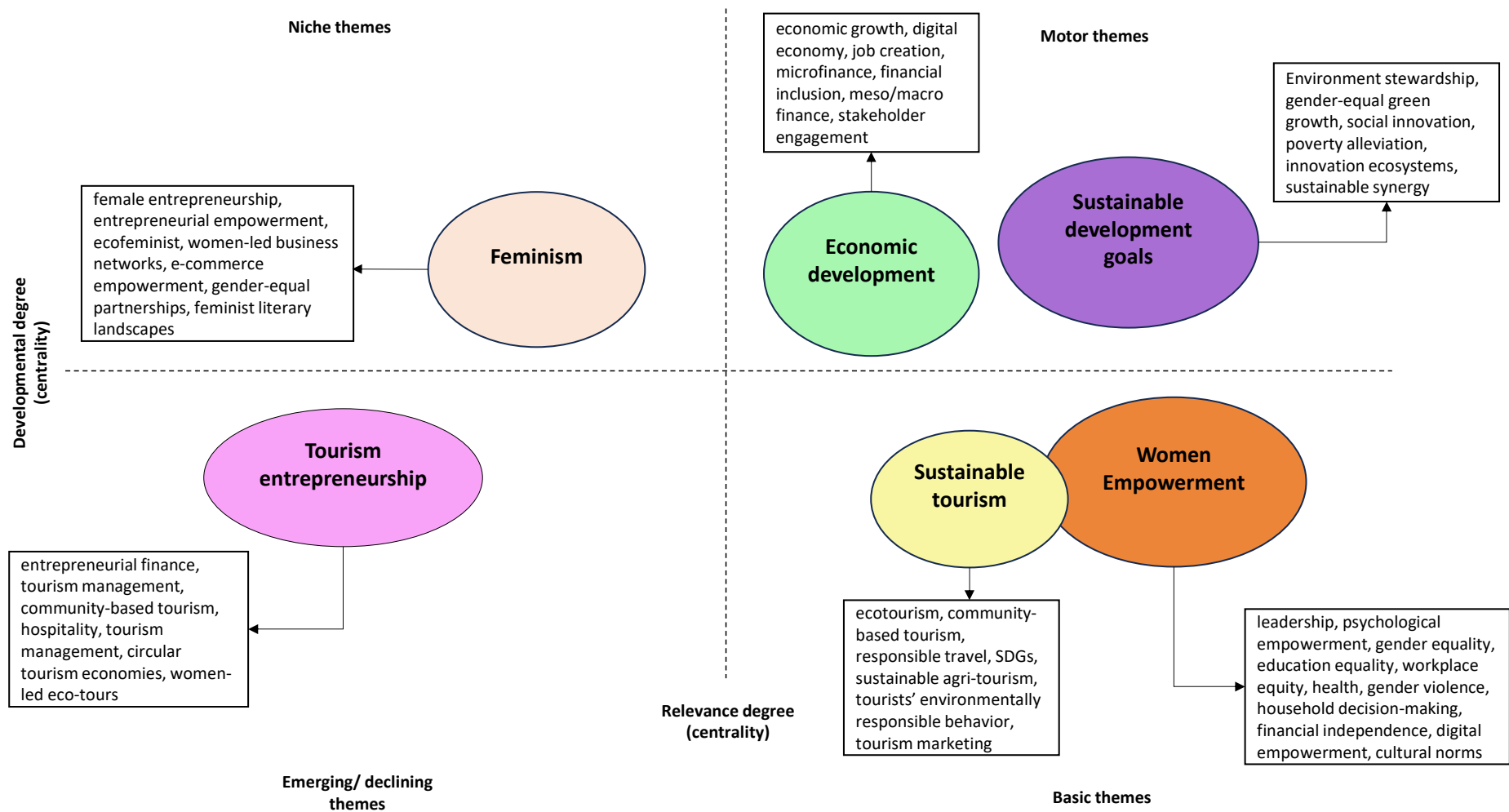


Figure 4. Strategic map in the field of tourism and women entrepreneurship

Source: own elaboration.

Figure 4 exhibits six different themes inside each of the four different quadrants: women empowerment, sustainable tourism, sustainable development goals (SDGs), economic development, feminism, and tourism entrepreneurship. While the connections to the other themes have become more robust as time has passed, the internal linkages within this quadrant exhibit a certain degree of fragility. This suggests the necessity for additional research to comprehensively investigate the underlying sub-themes (Rodríguez-Soler *et al.*, 2020).

‘Women empowerment’ lies in the basic quadrant that includes sub-themes like leadership, psychological empowerment, gender equality, education equality, workplace equity, health, gender violence, household decision-making, financial independence, digital empowerment, and cultural norms. Promoting women’s empowerment holds essential significance within the realm of sustainable tourism, and the engagement of women in entrepreneurial activities significantly contributes to realising this objective. Numerous research investigations have underscored the necessity of comprehending the determinants that impact women’s entrepreneurship within the tourism sector and its interrelation with the concept of sustainable tourism. Despite good intentions and mixed findings, research publications on women’s entrepreneurship have a pattern of reinforcing the stereotype that women’s firms are less important than men’s or, at most, complementary. This article uses discourse analysis to explore the methodologies behind these findings. It recommends new lines of inquiry that, rather than perpetuating women’s subordination, capture a broader and deeper range of women business owners’ experiences and perspectives (Ahl, 2019; Khoo *et al.*, 2024). There is a gender gap in the rate at which new businesses are started, and the literature investigates its causes, both in terms of individual variations and in terms of more systemic causes. Using data from 37 nations, they find that economic and social factors have a role in determining whether or not men or women decide to start their businesses. This study highlights the need of learning about the personal and societal influences on women-owned businesses (Minniti & Nardone, 2007). Women entrepreneurs in the tourism business would do well to study the impact of family dynamics. The literature suggests that tourism can help women gain economic and social autonomy. The importance of women’s involvement in tourism-related activities to local economic growth and social transformation is underlined. This demonstrates how tourism may help further the advancement of women, which is in line with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (Getz *et al.*, 2004; Mohammed, 1923).

The concept of ‘sustainable tourism’ is an additional element we find within the foundational quadrant, intersecting with the theme of women’s empowerment. This intersection underscores the significance of women within the realm of sustainable tourism. It includes sub-themes like ecotourism, community-based tourism, responsible travel, SDGs, sustainable Agri-tourism, tourists’ environmentally responsible behaviour, and tourism marketing. The term ‘sustainable tourism’ refers to any vacation that does not negatively impact the environment and helps promote long-term stability (Filimonau *et al.*, 2024; Liu, 2003). Despite the extensive research on gender dynamics in tourism, these studies have not significantly impacted the correction of gender-based power imbalances within the sector. This article addresses the reasons for this situation and proposes potential remedies. This study contends that the travel industry mirrors and even worsens the difficulties encountered in gender mainstreaming procedures within governmental policy around the world. We argue that the impact of such material has been negligible despite having substantial knowledge of the field. Furthermore, we propose that this is because the sustainable tourism paradigm has been slow to adopt principles of gender equality and gender analysis. Finally, it suggests ways in which gender might be better integrated into the theory and practice of sustainable tourism, arguing that much more work needs to be done (Ferguson & Alarcón, 2015). The literature highlights sustainable human capital management in women’s tourist entrepreneurship, particularly the importance of collaborative networks and tourism policy. The research highlights the positive financial and social outcomes that result when women take the initiative to meet local needs in popular tourist spots through their businesses. The literature review emphasises the value of women business owners in establishing environmentally friendly tourist destinations. Women’s participation in the tourism industry promotes economic development, social change, and individual autonomy. The findings highlight the importance of doing additional studies to fully comprehend the interconnected nature of gender,

sustainability, and entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. The extant literature illustrates that policymakers and scholars can gain useful information from the recommended models and frameworks for fostering sustainable tourism through women entrepreneurs (Kimbu *et al.*, 2019).

Sustainable development goals (SDGs) constitute one of the motor themes, along with environment stewardship, gender-equal green growth, social innovation, poverty alleviation, innovation ecosystems, and sustainable synergy as its sub-themes. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been the topic of much research and writing about the impact of tourism and volunteering. The evaluation highlights the importance of taking a holistic approach to researching the tourist industry's workforce and the role it plays in promoting sustainable tourism. While discussing sustainable tourism and the SDGs, it highlights the lack of focus on workforce-related topics (Lockstone-Binney & Ong, 2022). Another study looks into Tobago specifically to determine how well sustainable tourism fits in with meeting the SDGs. It is clear from this research that tourism can significantly contribute to the SDGs, and that stakeholder engagement is crucial to achieving these goals (Mohan, 2022). Women's entrepreneurship, women's involvement in tourism, and the SDGs are all interconnected in important ways, and the literature provides major insights into these relationships. The potential of tourism to promote peace and regional sustainable development is also highlighted, as is the importance of destination quality in achieving sustainable tourism goals. Women business owners are also honoured for their contributions to sustainable tourism and the SDGs. These business owners are crucial to the tourist industry's continued progress towards sustainability and innovation. The worldwide hotel industry and platforms like Airbnb have been hit hard by the COVID-19 epidemic, especially small and medium-sized businesses and establishments in underdeveloped nations (Nhamo *et al.*, 2020).

'Economic development' forms another crucial theme as part of the motor quadrant. It includes sub-themes like economic growth, digital economy, job creation, microfinance, financial inclusion, meso/macro finance, and stakeholder engagement. There are two facets to the relationship between economic growth and women's empowerment, which encompass expanding women's opportunities to improve their health, their education, their income, their rights, and their participation in the political process. First, economic development has the potential to lessen and significantly minimise gender gaps. Conversely, the persistent bias against women, as emphasised by Sen, can impede overall development. This signifies that empowerment has the potential to expedite the development process (Alcalá-Ordóñez & Segarra, 2023; Duflo, 2012). The literature highlights how the characteristics of a country's supply-side impact the growth of tourism, with a specific focus on the evolving role of economic development as a catalyst for tourism. While previous research has focused mostly on the economic benefits of tourism, the current investigation explores whether or not a specific level of economic development is required to attract visitors. The literature's primary objective is to ascertain how much growth in the economy affects tourists' preferences. It examines a worldwide panel dataset that includes traveller origin and country data. The sample is then broken down further according to geographic and GDP parameters to examine differences across competing nations within the same region. The results highlight the significance of economic development on a worldwide scale and its impact on travellers' choices. Subsample analysis reveals that disparities in economic development are less pronounced in countries with high GDP levels and more pronounced in developing nations (Eugenio-Martin *et al.*, 2008). According to the literature assessment, one can attain sustainable development goals and economic growth in the tourism industry through the promotion of collaboration, community involvement, and women entrepreneurship.

'Feminism' is another key theme that evolved as an independent theme with a high-density value, which contains sub-themes like women entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial empowerment, ecofeminism, women-led business networks, e-commerce empowerment, gender-equal partnerships, and feminist literary landscapes. Feminism is a social movement that fights for equal rights for women in all spheres of life, including the workplace, politics, education, and personal decision-making. The literature analyses the limited application of feminist theory to overcome gender prejudice in the entrepreneurial discourse. It implies that feminism can serve as an analytical framework to reveal and combat the perpetuation of subordination based on gender.

The research contends that there is little evidence that feminist philosophy has served to combat gender prejudice in entrepreneurship despite repeated appeals to do so. This research provides a framework for 'post-structural feminist analysis' to examine the implicit gender bias in entrepreneurial literature. The study presents feminism as a critical lens that may serve to expose implicit biases and question long-held beliefs about entrepreneurship (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). The emergence of women entrepreneurs has bolstered women's participation in economic growth. A study conducted in Macedonia analysed the state of women in the tourism industry and business ownership in Macedonia. The study's overarching goal was to ascertain the major impediments to women's advancement in tourism-related entrepreneurship. The research used a self-administered questionnaire given to staff and management at travel companies and tourism services in several cities around Macedonia. Although male and female respondents had many points in common, they held vastly different views on the topic of women entrepreneurs in the Macedonian tourism industry. When compared to men's more consistent perspectives, women rated their involvement in tourism entrepreneurship as low and with room for improvement. Moreover, the article details some of the unique difficulties faced by women in the tourism industry (Serafimova & Petrevska, 2018). Existing research emphasises the need of encouraging women to start their tourist businesses to foster long-term growth. The study focuses on sustainable entrepreneurship and the skills of women business owners in the travel sector. Findings emphasise difficulties women business owners confront, such as inadequate funding, inadequate education, and inadequate managerial and marketing expertise (Tovmasyan, 2022). According to Ertac and Tanova (2020), the tourist sector cannot achieve sustainable development without the active participation of women. The research focuses on how ecotourism might help empower women business owners, especially in rural regions, from a gendered perspective. Women's participation in the tourism industry can help boost the economy and advance gender equality. As a whole, the feminist literature on women's entrepreneurship, tourism participation, and sustainable tourism stresses the importance of addressing gender inequalities, institutionalised social institutions, and societal views that affect women entrepreneurs (Ertac & Tanova, 2020; Mahendru *et al.*, 2023).

'Tourism entrepreneurship' is another theme that has evolved as an independent theme along with entrepreneurial finance, tourism management, community-based tourism, hospitality, tourism management, circular tourism economies, and women-led eco-tours as its sub-themes. In-depth studies (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Zeng *et al.*, 2024) have highlighted the value of collaboration in community-based tourism planning and development. These projects show how helpful collaboration and public input can be in creating eco-friendly tourist destinations. They provide guidance for coordinating activities and give insight on the challenges of planning. The role of women in business has also been investigated in the tourism industry. According to studies (Eger *et al.*, 2022), learning the nuances of gender's role in sustainable business is especially important in the tourism sector. To achieve economic growth and gender equality in the workplace, which are both targets of sustainable development goals, more women need to start their own businesses in the tourism sector. The gendered aspects of entrepreneurship and sustainability in tourism are well known, though. The gender dynamics of sustainable entrepreneurship are complex, and further study is necessary to guide policy in the tourism entrepreneurship sector. Kimbu and Ngoasong (2016) cite research highlighting women's participation as social entrepreneurs in the tourism business. According to the findings, women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector are driving initiatives to improve local economies, expand access to quality education and training, create new jobs, and alleviate poverty. In addition to the financial gains, women who work in the tourism industry see boosts in autonomy, intelligence, and self-assurance. To completely understand the opportunities and limits women experience as business owners and employees in the tourism industry, more research is needed. The references here stress the importance of overcoming limitations like those of time, money, and knowledge in areas like management and marketing. They also discuss the positive effects of tourism on women's finances, mental health, and sense of self-worth. The literature on tourism entrepreneurship, particularly that which looks at women's roles and the long-term viability of the industry, sheds light on the value of cooperation, community involvement, and gender equality in the creation of tourist attractions. The importance of women's labour in the tourism industry and the rewards they receive as social entrepreneurs are highlighted. However,

more study is needed to properly grasp the complexities of the connection between gender and environmentally responsible business in the travel sector. With this information in hand, people may create policies and actions to encourage women entrepreneurship in the tourism industry, which in turn will contribute to long-term growth in the sector (Setiawan, 2023).

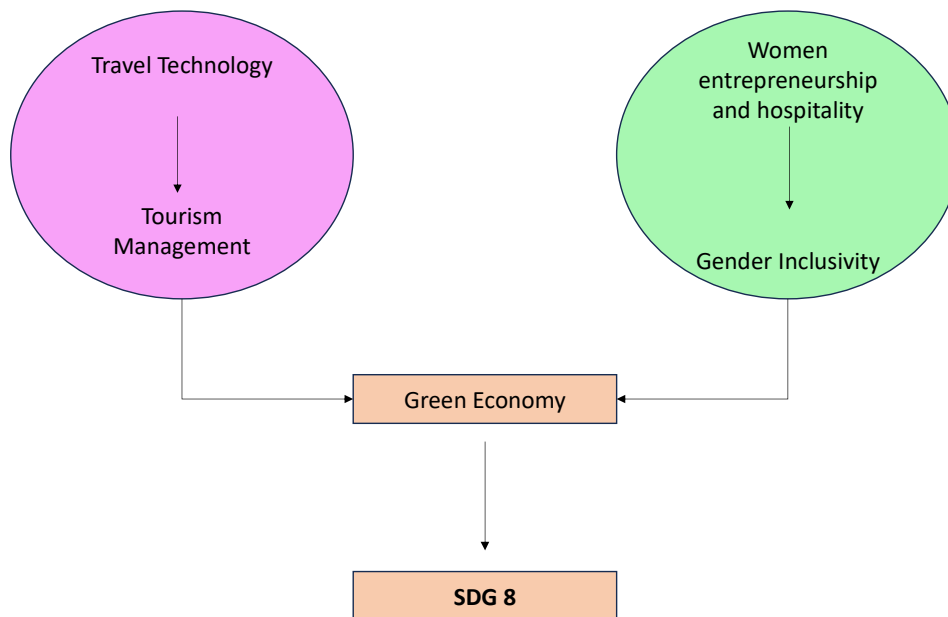


Figure 5. Conceptual framework

Source: own elaboration.

The conceptual framework (Figure 5) illustrates the interconnection between tourism management, gender inclusivity, and the green economy in achieving sustainable development goal 8 (SDG 8), which focuses on promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

Tourism management centres on the integration of travel technology in managing tourism. The use of technology in travel management can optimise resources, enhance efficiency, and reduce the environmental footprint of tourism activities. Improved tourism management practices align with sustainable principles, contributing to a green economy by promoting environmentally friendly and efficient practices in the tourism sector. The framework highlights the importance of gender inclusivity in the tourism and hospitality sectors, with a specific focus on women's entrepreneurship and hospitality roles (Li *et al.*, 2022). Gender inclusivity within the tourism sector fosters diversity and empowerment, enabling women to take on active roles as entrepreneurs and leaders. This inclusivity promotes economic growth and supports the social aspects of the green economy by ensuring that economic opportunities are equitably accessible (Pimpa, 2021a).

The green economy is positioned at the centre of the framework, representing the nexus where tourism management and gender inclusivity converge. By incorporating sustainable practices in tourism and promoting gender-inclusive policies, the green economy supports SDG 8's objectives by driving economic growth that is inclusive and sustainable. This approach encourages the development of eco-friendly practices and policies that reduce environmental impacts while promoting equitable economic opportunities. Notably, SDG 8 is at the bottom of the framework constituting the ultimate goal, showing how tourism management, gender inclusivity, and the green economy collectively contribute to sustainable economic growth, decent work, and inclusive employment opportunities (Raman *et al.*, 2022).

This framework illustrates a pathway to achieving SDG 8 by fostering a green economy through sustainable tourism management practices and gender-inclusive entrepreneurship in the hospitality sector. The interdependence of these elements emphasises a holistic approach to economic growth that values both environmental sustainability and social inclusivity.

Along with the conceptual framework, our study proposes some more future research agendas, as the review underscores the pivotal role of women's business ownership in advancing gender equality and contributing to the SDGs set by the United Nations. Prioritising access to funding, training, and mentorship programs for women within the tourism sector emerges as a critical agenda for policymakers. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for tourism policies that foster sustainable entrepreneurship by promoting eco-friendly tourism activities, supporting community-based enterprises, and implementing certification programs for sustainable tourism (NilgünAvcı, 2022). The review highlights the critical role of women's business ownership in advancing gender equality, creating economic value, and contributing to the achievement of the United Nations' SDGs. However, to maximise these impacts, future research must address several key areas that can provide actionable insights for policymakers, business leaders, and community organisers.

The access to financial resources remains one of the most significant barriers for women entrepreneurs, particularly in tourism. Research could explore models for improving funding accessibility, such as microfinance programs, low-interest loans, or government-backed grants tailored specifically for women in tourism. In-depth studies on the effectiveness of these funding initiatives and their impact on women's business longevity and growth in various regions could provide policymakers with data-driven guidance. Moreover, future studies may investigate the role of public-private partnerships in establishing training, mentorship, and networking platforms to strengthen women's participation in tourism entrepreneurship.

Training and mentorship are essential to empower women with the knowledge and skills to succeed in the competitive tourism industry. Future research may examine the effectiveness of various training methodologies (*e.g.*, experiential learning, digital learning platforms, peer-led mentorship) in enhancing women entrepreneurs' capabilities. Understanding the impact of mentorship networks within the tourism sector, especially in underrepresented communities, could shed light on effective practices for fostering mentorship relationships (Naderi *et al.*, 2019). Future research may also delve into the efficacy of eco-certification programs, the role of green marketing, and the economic impact of eco-friendly practices on local communities. One can expand this agenda to include examining the policy frameworks that encourage sustainable entrepreneurship and how these frameworks could be optimised to promote higher levels of compliance and innovation among women-led tourism businesses. Comparative studies on countries with established green tourism policies may offer insights into best practices for implementing similar policies in developing regions (de Lange & Dodds, 2017).

The lack of necessary knowledge and skills is a substantial barrier that limits the growth of women entrepreneurs in tourism. Research on skill development programs tailored to women in tourism may assess the effectiveness of programs that focus on management, marketing, and digital competencies. Exploring the potential of digital technology and social media in bridging knowledge gaps and creating virtual communities for women entrepreneurs could provide valuable insights. Comparative studies across different geographic and cultural contexts may also reveal unique challenges and tailored approaches to skill-building in tourism entrepreneurship (de Lange & Dodds, 2017).

The volatile nature of tourism due to external factors such as economic fluctuations, pandemics, and climate change impacts demands resilience. Future research may explore adaptive policy measures that bolster the resilience of women entrepreneurs in tourism. Examining risk management training, disaster response frameworks, and sustainable business practices can help women-led businesses withstand and recover from crises. Research on policies that foster resilience and adaptability in tourism could lead to actionable recommendations for supporting women entrepreneurs in navigating challenges and sustaining growth (Tovmasyan, 2022).

By addressing these research directions, future studies can contribute to a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient tourism industry where women entrepreneurs play a leading role in driving socio-economic progress.

Policy Implications

The intersection of gender and sustainable tourism entrepreneurship presents unique challenges and opportunities that warrant targeted policy interventions. The following policy implications address the

critical areas identified in this study, underscoring the need for gender-responsive, multilevel policies that support sustainable practices within tourism entrepreneurship.

To promote gender equity within sustainable tourism, it is essential for policymakers to design and implement gender-responsive policies. Such policies would not only encourage women to engage in sustainable tourism but also provide a supportive environment for them to thrive. One can also focus on policies that tackle gender-specific barriers, such as limited access to funding, training, and mentorship. By fostering an inclusive ecosystem, governments and tourism agencies can better support women in adopting sustainable practices and growing their ventures (Kutlu & Ngoasong, 2023). Furthermore, the role of gender in shaping entrepreneurial attitudes toward sustainability requires exploration, as it can inform strategies for fostering eco-friendly business practices. Golik and Wasilczuk (2025) confirm that gendered entrepreneurial identity strongly influences sustainability-oriented decision-making in tourism enterprises.

Women entrepreneurs often face unique obstacles in implementing sustainability initiatives due to limited access to resources, networks, and training. Policy interventions can focus on creating accessible pathways for women to adopt eco-friendly practices. Subsidies, tax breaks, or grants could incentivise sustainable practices among women-led tourism businesses. Moreover, policies that encourage the formation of networks, alliances, and cooperatives specifically for women in tourism could help them share resources, knowledge, and strategies (Alarcón & Cole, 2019). To ensure the effectiveness of these policies, governments could establish monitoring systems to measure the impact of gender-responsive sustainability policies on women entrepreneurs in tourism. Shrestha *et al.* (2024) found that gender-focused sustainability training combined with peer-based mentoring significantly enhanced the adoption of circular economy models among women-led tourism SMEs.

The gendered impact of economic sanctions and foreign policy on women in the tourism sector highlights a critical policy gap. Policies that account for the effects of statecraft on tourism-related businesses can help mitigate unintended negative consequences for women. Governments and international organisations could consider creating sanction relief programs to support women entrepreneurs in regions affected by economic or political instability. Research on the effects of foreign policy on women's empowerment in tourism may emphasise the need for adaptive, gender-sensitive policies that provide a safety net for women entrepreneurs in tourism during periods of economic sanctions or political challenges (Seyfi *et al.*, 2022). Stylianou *et al.*, Liasidou, and Garanti, (2025) explain that crisis-responsive tourism policies with gender considerations have proven effective in post-conflict tourism recovery strategies.

The extant literature on tourism entrepreneurship reveals that many existing policies do not include all entrepreneurial demographics, often overlooking women and other marginalised groups. To address this gap, policymakers must adopt an inclusive approach to tourism entrepreneurship. This may involve setting diversity targets for tourism grants, implementing mentorship programs specifically for underrepresented groups, or incorporating gender diversity criteria into tourism development policies. A comprehensive framework that promotes inclusivity would enhance economic opportunities and foster a more diverse and resilient tourism sector. In particular, inclusive policies could focus on promoting women-led small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in rural areas, where women entrepreneurs often have the potential to bring significant socio-economic change (Ratten, 2020). Dy and MacNeil (2025) emphasise that intersectional approaches targeting rural, ethnic, and older women can significantly improve inclusivity outcomes in sustainable tourism programs.

The adoption of a multilevel model to understand sustainable entrepreneurship in tourism requires policy alignment across individual, organisational, and national levels. This approach suggests that sustainable entrepreneurship policies should be designed to address distinct challenges at each level. For instance, at the individual level, policies could focus on entrepreneurial education and capacity-building initiatives tailored to women. At the organisational level, incentives for adopting sustainable practices, such as certifications or recognitions for eco-friendly businesses, could drive organisational commitment to sustainability. At the national and regional levels, broader policy frameworks promoting green tourism infrastructure and sustainable practices could be implemented. Such a multilevel policy approach would create a cohesive support system, fostering sustainable entrepreneurship across different scales of operation (Crnogaj *et al.*, 2014; Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2022; Stylianou *et al.*, 2025).

To ensure that gender-responsive policies effectively support women entrepreneurs in sustainable tourism, governments must establish monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. These systems would track policy outcomes, measuring the extent to which women-led tourism enterprises benefit from sustainability initiatives. Data collection on the effectiveness of policies, such as access to funding, mentorship, and eco-certification programs, would offer insights into areas for improvement. Moreover, M&E systems could also incorporate feedback from women entrepreneurs to make policies more responsive to their needs. Through transparent and accountable policy evaluation processes, governments can continuously refine their approach to supporting women in sustainable tourism entrepreneurship (Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2022).

Sustainable tourism is a global issue that requires international cooperation to address. Policies that encourage cross-border collaboration and knowledge-sharing can help develop gender-responsive and sustainable tourism practices worldwide. Governments could create bilateral or multilateral programs to facilitate the exchange of best practices, technological innovation, and funding opportunities, particularly for women-led tourism businesses. By working together, countries can develop joint initiatives that support women entrepreneurs in sustainable tourism, fostering resilience and growth in the sector.

These policy recommendations aim to create a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient tourism industry where women entrepreneurs can play a central role in driving socio-economic progress. By prioritising gender equity and sustainable practices, policymakers can help build a tourism industry that not only contributes to economic growth but also supports environmental preservation and social well-being.

CONCLUSIONS

The role of women entrepreneurship in advancing gender inclusivity and sustainable tourism development plays a great role in advancing the country's economic condition. We examined the structural barriers and enabling factors that influence women's participation in tourism entrepreneurship and synthesises key themes and conceptual frameworks. Through a dual analytical lens, combining feminist critique and sustainability discourse, we revealed persistent gender disparities in access to resources, institutional support, and policy recognition, while also identifying opportunities where women's entrepreneurial efforts foster environmental stewardship, community resilience, and socio-economic progress (Martínez Caparrós, 2020).

The study offers actionable insights for tourism practitioners, policymakers, and business leaders. Tourism enterprises and destination managers can promote inclusivity by implementing gender-sensitive policies, mentorship programs, and women-led innovation initiatives. Hospitality organisations should prioritise work-life balance, leadership development, and equitable career pathways for women. For policymakers, the study emphasises the need for gender-responsive tourism frameworks. Targeted interventions, such as financial access programs, microcredit schemes for women-led startups, and green entrepreneurship incentives, empower women in the sector. Governments should align tourism policies with SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 8 (decent work), ensuring women's contributions are recognised and amplified. Authorities should also establish rigorous monitoring systems to assess the effectiveness of gender-inclusive policies. Women's entrepreneurship in tourism challenges traditional gender roles, fosters inclusive growth, and elevates local communities in global tourism narratives. By valuing women's economic participation, societies can drive cultural shifts toward greater equity, sustainability, and shared prosperity.

The study is not without limitations. It may overlook region-specific insights, unpublished data, and non-English research that could provide deeper contextual understanding. The proposed conceptual framework remains theoretical and requires empirical validation through case studies, cross-country comparisons, and participatory research. Future studies may adopt an intersectional approach, considering factors like ethnicity, class, and geography, to develop more inclusive tourism models.

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