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Women's Pathways through Entrepreneurship in the Tourism Industry

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Abstract:

Entrepreneurship is strongly gendered and persistently so across age cohorts. In tourism, although women students dominate in most European hospitality and tourism management schools, and often constitute the majority of employees, they are a minority in decision-making positions and as entrepreneurs (Pizam, 2017). Also, women's entrepreneurship in tourism has been highly selective, being typically linked to stereotypical women's home and family care work: e.g. home-stays, handicrafts (Kwaramba et al., 2012), the emerging Sharing Economy (Juil, 2015), and social entrepreneurship (Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2016).

The entrepreneurship journey typically involves different—but not necessarily linear—phases: latent entrepreneurs with preferences for self-employment; nascent entrepreneurs taking steps to start a business; entrepreneurs in new businesses (Bönte & Piegeler, 2013; Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2017), and subsequent consolidation and growth phases. However, for women's careers, the relevance of the existing stage models based on the experiences of male-dominated samples is questionable. Instead, researchers have advocated a more contextualized approach that looks beyond predetermined models (Zahra et al., 2014) and recognizes additional influences. For example, women are less likely to follow simple sequential steps in business creation, as a consequence of interrupted careers and family caring roles (Baum, 2016). Their networks have more limited outreach and diversity (Welter, 2004) while use of technology and social media are gendered (Figueroa-Domecq, 2011). A narrow focus on economic benefits has also constrained attempts to empower women as entrepreneurs (Parsheera & Sood, 2011). There are also important differences in respect to cognitive processes, such as perception, problem-solving, opportunity identification, and risk tolerance (Brush, 2009). These intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence the type of businesses women launch. Women apply for fewer and smaller loans than men (De la Fuente et al., 2014), are more reluctant to acquire debt

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(Caliendo et al., 2009), and are more likely to open businesses in the service sector (GEM, 2017).

Consequently, the aim of this contribution is the critical evaluation of women's entrepreneurship journey, to identify and assess the different pathways that women follow, based on a post-structuralist theoretical framework, and evaluating the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, and of what is visible and invisible. It follows a qualitative methodology through interviews undertaken in the UK and Spain; primary data will come from interviews with 15 men and women entrepreneurs in each country and content analysis using NVivo12. Snowball sampling utilising multiple entry points will be the basis for the initial selection to avoid stereotyping and ensure the participation of entrepreneurs with a range of experiences in the different tourism industries: Hospitality (accommodation and restaurant industry); Commercialization (communication and distribution); Transportation; Events or other Tourist Services. Different types of tourist destinations are also sampled so that rural and urban entrepreneurs are included in the study. Finally, the comparison of a necessity-driven entrepreneurship country, like Spain, and an innovation-driven country like UK, provides an important framework for evaluation of individual journeys, but also of the importance of other interactional and institutional factors.

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