

TMS CONFERENCE SERIES (2018)



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NEW CHALLENGES, STRATEGIES AND TRENDS IN TOURISM, HOSPITALITY AND MANAGEMENT

Proceedings of the TMS
Algarve 2018 Conference

Editores:

Marisol B. Correia
José António C. Santos
Luís Nobre Pereira
Margarida Custódio Santos
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UNIVERSIDADE DO ALGARVE
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Chapter II

How Gender (In)equalities are perceived by female tourism workers in the Douro region?

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Abstract

The study intends to observe the female worker's perspective about gender issues in order to draw some conclusions about gender inequalities. Furthermore, the research intended to perceive if tourism has the capacity to promote gender equality, or if the activity only reproduces the social norm, leaving women in the lower working positions or in occupations related to household duties and responsibilities.

A qualitative research method was adopted and the research strategy was based in a case study. Semi-structured interviews and participant observation were used as the data collection techniques. The set of interviews was directed to women working in tourism positions in the Douro region.

The interviews showed that the reproduction of gender stereotypes is still very noticeable in the Douro region. It is perceived that the image of women in the region is still connected to the household and childcare responsibilities and the existence of gender discrimination in the territory, in a direct or indirect way, was also presented in the interviewees' discourses, mainly in the moral harassment form.

Keywords: Tourism, gender equality, gender empowerment, Douro region.

1. Introduction

Although some indicators demonstrate that gender inequality declined in recent years, a persistent gap concerning the women's role in the labour market remains. Gender studies are therefore indispensable in order to comprehend and transform this reality, as gender equality was not yet reached by any country (World Economic Forum, 2014). In the tourism field, those inequalities are also effortlessly noticeable.

In a broader sense, this study intends to perceive if the tourism industry has the capacity to promote gender equality and contribute to women's empowerment processes, ascertaining the changes and/or continuities produced in the personal and social life of women working in this industry, in the Douro region. As to achieve this goal, some sub enquiries emerged. This research ambitions to analyse the role of

women in the Douro's tourism industry, the social effects that the tourism activity can have in a female working population, as well as to present some overall structure indicators of the gender inequality evidence in the Douro's region. Hence, this research aims to answer the following research question: how gender (in)equalities are perceived by female tourism workers in the Douro region? This study was outlined to observe the tourism female worker's perspective, in order to evaluate their ideas and thoughts about the gender situation in the Douro region.

2. Literature review: gender matters in tourism

2.1. Gendered labour market and the tourism industry

Recent studies show that the workforce gap between genders have declined in some countries lately (Lips, 2014; Miller, 2017). Although some progress can be seen in this direction, a persistent gap concerning the women's role in the labour market remains. Data from 2012 shows that, in Portugal, a woman gets 81.5% of what a man receives in average monthly basic earnings, whereas when considering other components of the wage, such as compensation for supplementary work, bonuses and other benefits, this number drops to 78.9% (CITE, 2017a). Despite of working more hours, there is also a difference between the types of job each group are usually subject to: as the responsibility for the house duties and for taking care of the children usually relies on women, overloaded with double working shifts or only able to perform part-time jobs, often linked with lower wages, lack of promotion opportunities and lack of job security (United Nations, 2015).

Comprising a great range of services and areas, the workplace in the tourism industry is still very segregated and gender-related social norms can be easily seen. Women's participation in the tourism industry averages from 55.5 percent globally to 70 percent on regional levels (Baum, 2013). As stated by Ferguson (2011), "tourism employment is highly gendered, and – as with many other industries – draws on gender inequalities that provide a large global supply of highly flexibilised and low-paid female workers and potential tourism entrepreneurs" (p. 237).

According to GENTOUR, a research project from the University of Aveiro, there are three basic concepts that are needed to be considered when discussing workforce gender inequalities: 1) the glass ceiling concept, referred to the invisible barriers that limit women and ethnical minorities to progress on their careers, despite their talent and qualification; 2) the horizontal segregation concept, referred as the propensity for males and females to be concentrated in specific roles, as above mentioned; and 3) the vertical segregation concept, referred to the propensity of men to predominate in higher hierarchical positions and of women to perform in the lower ones, due to the glass ceiling effect (GENTOUR, 2012). According to this project,

There is a strong vertical segregation of employment: women, despite represent 60.1% of the total workers in the sector, correspond to approximately 81.8% of its non-skilled workers, but only 41.1% of those in management positions; women also have supervisory and coordination functions to a lesser (14.1% of women vs. 26.4% of men). (GENTOUR, 2012, p.8).

All those numbers demonstrate some of the inequalities in the tourism sector in Portugal, and how the female gender suffers from them.

2.2. Gender equality and empowerment

Equality, in a broader sense means "the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities" (Oxford, 2017). Equality is indeed a human's right and should be achieved by all individuals in any society, despite gender, race, religion, etc. Gender equality incorporates the discussion and the possible ways to change structures in our society, contributing to a better balance in the power relationships between men and women. Moreover, even though gender inequalities cannot be perceived and be considered the same in different communities and cultures, women have always the disadvantage, regardless the society.

Towards a better approach to gender equality in the country, Portugal has two different commissions focused on this matter. One, named Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment (CITE), promoting equality in employment, fighting discrimination¹. Likewise, the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG)² is the national body accountable for the defence of gender equality, ensuring the implementation of public policies. Both work together for the implementation of these policies at the National Plans.

Gender relations are imbued with power, as they are unequal and uneven, and keep women subjected to men and to the patriarchal domain (Costa, 2004). Empowerment therefore is a process to change the power distribution "both in interpersonal relations and in institutions throughout society" (Stromquist, 1993, p. 13). And, even though empowerment and gender equality are related words, they are not synonymous.

A lot has been said about the potential of tourism to reduce inequalities and contribute to women's empowerment. Many authors agree with the evidence that the employment in the tourism sector can have a positive effect in it, and could contribute to reach gender equality (Costa, Bakas, Durão & Breda, 2015; EIGE, 2016;

¹ <http://cite.gov.pt/>

² <http://cite.gov.pt/>

Moswete & Lacey, 2015). But others (Ferguson, 2011; Moreno & Cañada, 2018) point to a series of contradictions, since tourism, far from generating an alternative of autonomy for working women, causes a reproduction of pre-existing gender inequalities, reinforcing them through the inequalities mentioned in section 2.2.

In order to achieve this so much desired gender equivalence, gender equality policies are needed to support the access to those opportunities for both genders. Accordingly, governments, civil society and private companies have developed programs and actions to change institutional structures in order to reduce gender inequalities at the workplace, the public institutions and in the whole society, varying between different countries and regions. In Douro's territory, as Makanse (2017) showed, there is no state or local policies on gender equality, neither on the public segment nor the private, so there seems to be none intervention over the gender inequalities in general along with a low awareness of their existence in society.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study area

The Douro region is located in the north region of Portugal and it is internationally known by its wine culture, landscapes and the river bearing the same name. For the purpose of this paper, the region considered for the research is the sub region NUT III - Douro, included in the North Region, comprehending 19 different municipalities. Data from the 2011 census presented a total population of 205.157 inhabitants in the Douro region, being 107.025 from this total women and the other 98.132 men (Pordata, 2017). Though there was a larger number of women in the total population, men had a greater presence in the labour market in the region.

Tourism in the Douro region is largely associated to the wine culture, the stunning landscapes, the mountains and valleys, and the Douro river. Part of the region was declared by UNESCO World Heritage as a cultural landscape in 2001 and the tourism activity had been increasing in the territory over the last years. There are no official statistics from the Douro region only, but according to GENTOUR (2012), most of the working force in the tourism industry in Portugal is formed by women.

3.2. Research methods

Research Design: A qualitative research method was adopted to obtain in-depth, rich data on the gender (in)equalities.

Social/anthropological nature of tourism from the research design to teaching adopts extensively case studies as research strategy (Beeton, 2005), therefore a case study was the research strategy adopted. This was our research strategy, combined with an exploratory approach, with the aim of seeking the thoughts and perceptions of

female workers on gender (in)equality in the Douro region, making part of a vast research, in which one of its lines of research focuses on gender inequality in Douro's labour market³.

Participants: Since this research intended to understand the tourism field female worker's perspective, only women were the participants in the study. Nine respondents were recruited through a purposive method, with the following criteria: age (at least 18 years old); job in the tourism industry; job in different tourism subsectors (accommodation, food and beverage, travel services, etc.); employment type (employee and self-employed workers); residence (in Douro region); employment position (occupying different employment positions). In total, nine interviews were carried with women from different subsectors and job positions. All interviews were conducted in Portuguese and recorded.

Data Collection Procedures: The qualitative data was collected between May and August 2017, in some of the municipalities that are part of the Douro region. Given the budget and time constraints of this study and due to the limited mobility in the region caused by the lack of public transport, the current research had to focus in specific locations for the interviews, not being able to talk to women from all the 19 municipalities that are part of the Douro region. For these reasons, we applied interviews in two of the main visited places in Douro region: its capital, the city of Vila Real, and a little historic village, Provesende.

Semi-structured interviews directed to women working in tourism positions were used as the data collection technique, mixed with participant observation. A thematic interview guide was created and included the following sets of questions: 1) referred to the establishment of the actual profession and previous education of the interviewees in order to understand when and why they decided to work in the tourism industry; 2) related to female workers' perceptions about tourism industry; 3) related to the interviewee's perception of the tourism labour division in the Douro region, and about discrimination, both in the tourism context and in general; and 4) aimed to perceive the interviewee's perception of a woman's life, specifically in the Douro region.

Data Analysis: In analysing data this study uses processes and techniques commonly used by qualitative researchers. In this research we use qualitative content analysis to interpret the manifest content (what the text says) and the latent content (interpreted meaning) (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Based on the interview guides, themes coding categories were identified. All authors read, discussed and

³ The project Dourotur - Tourism and Technological Innovation in the Douro is a project that intends to create proposals to improve the competitiveness of the tourist destination "Douro", through a more creative, sustainable, responsible and durable tourism. For details see: <http://dourotur.utad.pt/>.

agreed on the final categorisation and themes, categories and their sub-categories (Table 1). The most illustrative citations were taken and were used to support relevant arguments that emerged from the interviews data.

Table 1 - Themes, categories and sub-categories describing the perceptions by women on gender

Themes	Categories	Sub-Categories
Work context	Education and work context	Previous education and working experiences Working in the tourism industry Work practices and designations Household work – Double working journey
	The tourism industry	Positive and negative sides of working in the tourism industry
Discrimination experiences	Perceptions of the influence of gender in professional relations	Gendered jobs in tourism in the Douro region Discrimination based on gender roles
Geographical and cultural context	Douro Region	Being a woman in the Douro region

4. Results from the tourism workers interviews

Profile: The interviews directed to women working in the tourism industry occurred in two different municipalities: Vila Real and Provesende. Vila Real is one of largest municipalities in the Douro region. Provesende is a tiny village located in the Sabrosa municipality, with an average of 300 inhabitants. Table 2 shows some characteristics from the female worker's interviewees.

We are aware that the group of respondents does not correspond to the niche of the labour market in which, according to the existing studies, the majority of working women in the tourism sector are concentrated.

Next, we present interviews analysis divided in sub-categories to facilitate its comprehension.

Previous education and working experiences: From the total of interviewees, two completed university studies and four also graduated in post-university courses. Three interviewees did not finish any kind of higher education, nevertheless, two of

them are owners of their own companies. Also, only one interviewee participated in a technical tourism course. She also started a higher education course in tourism, but did not finish it. Most of the interviewees stated that they did not had previous experiences working in the sector nor had a professional or higher formation in tourism – per say, only two had worked in the industry before. When questioned in which sectors they worked before starting their actual job in the tourism sector, answers varied from a great range of areas including engineering, design, law, real estate brokers, administration, the medical sector, call centers and so on. From those trajectories and backgrounds, it is perceived the lack of need for formal or professional education in tourism to work in the industry.

Table 2 - Tourism workers profile

TOURISM WORKERS							
	Occupation	Age	Work Location	Civil status	Children	Time in the Occupation	Level of Education
1	Handcrafts store owner	41	Vila Real	Married	0	5 years	Postgraduate studies
2	Hostel owner	40	Vila Real	Married	0	2 years	High school
3	Handcrafts store employee	61	Vila Real	Married	2	3 years	University graduate
4	Massagist	44	Vila Real	Single	0	3 years	Postgraduate studies
5	Restaurant owner	35	Vila Real	Married	2	2 years	University graduate
6	Restaurant owner	61	Provesende	Married	2	14 years	Postgraduate studies
7	Hotel employee	32	Provesende	Married	2 (+ pregnant)	2 years	Postgraduate studies
8	Travel agency owner	31	Vila Real	Married	2	1 years	University graduate - Incomplete
9	Restaurant employee	35	Vila Real	Married	2	3 years	High school

Working in the tourism industry: In the studied group, five out of the nine interviewees are the owners of their own business. Four of them started their business less than 5 years ago and the other one started hers 14 years ago. In all cases, only one had worked before in the tourism sector, but so far all of them stated they had achieved success in the field. For example, interviewee number 2 is a hostel owner, taking care of the business in a partnership with another female colleague. None had previous experiences in the tourism industry but decided to open the business and, so far, the activity has showed to be prosperous. Interviewee 8, currently the owner of a travel agency in the region, stated that, before having her own business, she used to work in a call center "with miserable conditions, working day and night to receive the minimum wage". Eventually, she decided to open a

business in the tourism field mainly due to her appreciation on dealing with people and stated that she perceived a great potential on bringing tourists to the Douro region.

Even though the process of opening a new business sounded somehow smoother for the new generation of young entrepreneurs, interviewee 6, owner of a restaurant in Provesende, a smaller village, stated she had many problems to start hers, 14 years ago:

"It was a very complicated process. I did not have any help, contrariwise I had to face many barriers. Everyone builds me walls, never bridges" (Interviewee 6).

She also mentioned the negative view and the lack of support from the local community towards her new business:

"In the beginning people from the village boycotted me. In fact, still today tourists will arrive and ask in other establishments where they can eat something, and people will give directions to other cities, such as Pinhão or Sabrosa. This happens since this was a different project: per say, a female project – and here in the Douro men are still the ones who can have the idea, own the business, and be the boss – and so it created some discomfort in the village." (Interviewee 6).

"When I started the business, my husband did not believe on it, he did not trust that the restaurant was going to be as successful as it is; however, he always supported me and still helps when needed." (Interviewee 6).

Interviewee 4, a massagist, also stated that it was really hard to start her business in the region:

"It is really hard to open a business in the countryside. If you are not in a big city or at the coast, it is not easy. Especially if you are a woman" (Interviewee 4).

Considering the geographical context, the lack of support suffered by the interviewees, especially the ones who started their businesses a while ago, goes in line with what Parkhurst (2017) stated about the gender inequalities in the Douro, built over the historical and social constructions of the region. Women were never seen as the owner of the businesses, yet the owners of the household duties and childcare activities. Yet, even with those examples, from the youngsters entrepreneurs' speeches, we might perceive perhaps an increase in acceptance of female

entrepreneurs in the region, probably due to changes in society and modernity. The prejudice suffered by interviewees 4 and 6 will be analysed within the specific question about discrimination, done later in the interview.

Work practices and designations: When asked to describe their routines, it was clear that most of the women had a pretty intensive workload and busy schedules, reaching in some cases 13 hours spent per day in the workplace. Interviewee 2, for example, revealed that she spends 9 to 10 hours a day in her workplace and only enjoys a free weekend, every 15 days. The same was stated by interviewee 5, who mentioned she arrives at her workplace usually at 9am and only goes home around midnight, from Tuesday to Sunday, taking only Monday as a free day per week. Interviewee 6 works every day from 7h30 until midnight on high season, with no free or resting days in between. For interviewee 8, the day in the office starts at 7am where she stays usually until 8pm.

All those speeches confirm the usual representation of the female worker in the tourism industry, characterized by intensive working hours, the need to work on weekends and at night, double shifts (as we will discuss later) and the usual lack of work rights and conditions. Regarding the tasks performed by the interviewees, they clearly varied depending on their occupation, workplace and profession. All the interviewees who were working at hospitality units mentioned they were responsible for a great range of tasks, including, but not limited to, reception, cleaning, maintenance, check in, check out, table service, washing, etc.

Such as the following example, the female worker in the *quinta* described her routine and explained that all employees, except the female cook, who stays in the kitchen the whole day, perform the same tasks. These include cleaning, serving the table at breakfast, helping in the kitchen, washing, drying and ironing the bed linens, performing the check in and check out, working at the reception, etc. Her husband also works in the same hospitality unit and have the same job position as her. When asked if the tasks were equal for her and him, she said:

"He does everything, except ironing the clothes and making the beds. He did it before because in the begin there were only two employees: him and another girl, so he had to do it. But later I started working here, another two girls were hired, the staff grew and, as we are many women now, he does not have to make the beds anymore" (Interviewee 7).

Her statement reinforces the idea that women must be responsible for the household tasks, even in a context where both genders have the same occupation and should perform the same tasks. The gender division of labour and, thus, the social roles theory proposed by Eagly (as cited in Lips, 2014), can be easily perceived

in this kind of speech. The phrase "as we are many women now, he does not have to make the beds anymore" only strengthens this perception of the relationship between women and domestic labour, reinforcing and perpetuating the stereotype.

Household work – Double working journey: When asked about their work routine, only two of the interviewees mentioned the household tasks promptly. All the others described their working day and finalized it with something similar to "then I will go home, to start it all over again on the next day". However, when asked if besides the actual job, they also were responsible for unpaid domestic labour, all the interviewees answered yes.

Only one of the interviewees alleged she has a female maid coming few times a week to help with the main tasks and another stated that her mother is responsible for the major cleaning chores, as they live together and share the apartment. One interviewee also mentioned she has the assistance of her mother and her mother-in-law to take care of the kids, when needed. In this case, it is also perceived that the responsibility for the child care usually remains in a female possession and sphere, as the interviewee mentioned that both her mother and mother-in-law would help with the child care, but did not mention her father or father-in-law (or any other male actor) assuming the same position.

Six out of the eight interviewees who are in a relationship stated that their partner also "helps" to perform chores at home, and two of the entrepreneurs indicated that their husbands are even the main responsible for the household tasks, as dealing with the new business consumes most of their time. It is possible to see some improvement on the division of the household labour through the interviewees' answers, especially by the younger ones.

Interviewee 3 and interviewee 6, the ones with ages over 60 years, were the ones who stated that their husbands never helped them with any household task during their married life. Interviewee 3 has two sons and thinks nowadays society is changing towards a better equilibrium in the gender relations at home. She stated that the older one is married and "he helps the wife with the cleaning, washing the dishes, cooking and even ironing the clothes". However, when asked if the younger one, who still lives with her, also performs some household tasks, she denied and stated that he "needs to find a woman to impose it and put him on the right track". We can take two main ideas from her speech: first, the indication that men help women while performing household tasks, as it is an inherited female responsibility chore instead of a chore to be performed by both genders; second, the indication that women need to impose their wish to share the responsibilities of the house, instead of men also taking accountability for it.

Positive and negative sides of working in the tourism industry: When asked about the foremost positive side of working in this sector, all the interviewees refer somehow to the chance of meeting new people, training and improving a second (or third) language and learning about new cultures. Getting into a more regional aspect, the greatest positive side mentioned around working in the industry in the Douro region was the capacity of promoting the area for people who never heard about it before, sharing their culture and local traditions. It was clear that most of the interviewees shared a sense of belonging and pride towards the region, and are happy when they get a chance to show and share their roots with outsiders.

On the other hand, the most remarked negative side of this industry, according to the interviewees, was the lack of fixed working hours, the necessity of working on the weekends, holidays and sometimes at night, and thus, the lack of time for the family or for personal activities.

Surprisingly, only one of the interviewees mentioned the low wages, but this could be related to the fact that the interviews were recorded at the interviewees' workplaces, where sometimes they were around their bosses and colleagues. Another reason can be related to the job position of the interviewees. As many were owners of their own business and responsible for the salaries of their own employees, they probably would not express any disfavour towards low wages in the sector. Unfortunately, this study did not enquire the wages or earnings of the interviewees, in order to analyse any economic dimension. Nevertheless, due to the multiplicity of the studied cluster and the reduced number of member in the group, the answers would probably not be an honest representation of the salary situation of the female workers in the Douro region.

The lack of qualified professionals was the main mentioned negative topic of the industry, when talking about the regional aspects. Interviewee 5 stated that it is hard to find committed people in the area, who are willing to work on holidays, weekends and late at night. Interviewee 8 also reinforced the above statement, adding the difficulty of preserving the quality of the touristic services, as the travel agency will sell a package "but the client might not be satisfied in the end because of the lack of service's quality in certain establishments in the region".

Seasonality was also mentioned by some of the interviewees, more specifically from the owners of business and entrepreneurship, which have their business directly affected by the number of tourists in town. Interviewee 6 stated that the tourism in the Douro is a luxury tourism, even though lately some companies are trying to turn it into mass tourism. Interviewee 8 also related the intensification of the mass tourism in the region as a negative aspect, in the way it is becoming harder to satisfy

the tourists coming to the area due to the decrease of the quality provided by the tourist operators and by some businesses.

Gendered jobs in tourism in the Douro region: When asked about what kind of jobs the interviewees perceived as the most performed in the tourism industry by men and women in the Douro region, the answers mainly headed to an unanimity. It was easily acknowledged the perception that women usually work in the kitchen, in the reception and on sales, while men usually take care of the business, or work as drivers and waiters. This goes along with many of the previous studies on the tourism labour market, where women usually perform tasks related to household activities (GENTOUR, 2012). When trying to explain the reasons they believed were the drivers for the labour division in the industry, most of them reinforce social preconceptions, related again to the social roles theory described in the literature review. All those perceptions and speeches once more reinforce the position women are expected to occupy in the tourism industry in the Douro region, therefore portraying a naturalization of gender roles.

On the other hand, two of the interviewees mentioned they do not perceive any partition of genders in the region.

When asked if they believed that some jobs or positions in the industry are not at all performed or occupied by some of the genders, the answers were mixed. Six out of the 9 interviewees believe that both genders can and do execute all sort of tasks, in greater or less occurrence. They mainly sustained this argument mentioning that nowadays things are changing and society is more open to see both males and females performing tasks that were usually executed by only one of the groups. Examples of men working at the reception and kitchen, and women at high positions, as managers or owners of the businesses, were given by the interviewees. However, some interviewees affirmed that some occupations and tasks are still not performed by some of the groups. Mainly, again, the connection between household duties and the female gender emerged:

The above-mentioned discourse correlates exactly, once again, to the gender role theory, where women are perceived as more sensible, caring and better at performing tasks related to household duties. At least, in this case, the interviewee perceives that this could be connected to the fact that women are more prone to perform those kinds of quests while young, following the traditional paper portrayed by society, where women assist their mothers since little and receive little kitchens, irons and dolls as gifts, to already learn how to be a "good housewife".

Some interviewees also mentioned the vertical segregation division of labour:

"I cannot remember a single female working as a hotel director. It is all men. All men! As for the reception, it varies: you can see more female workers, but there are some men. And as for the head of reception, I would say it is well divided, half and half. However, for higher positions you can tell there is a male predominance, without any doubt" (Interviewee 8).

Literature review is corroborated from this perception and speech seen in Portugal workplace, where a woman is less seen in supervision and coordination positions in the tourism sector than man (GENTOUR, 2012).

Discrimination based on gender roles: Most women stated they never felt discriminated in their professional life and did not have any knowledge about any other female employee who suffered from this prejudice. However, even with the negative statements, when answering other questions, it was possible to perceive some hidden prejudice:

"Is not usual people see a woman managing a restaurant alone. I have some people arriving and asking to speak with the manager. And when they see me, they ask: "Oh, but isn't your husband here?" (Interviewee 5).

Nonetheless, interviewee 5 stated that she doesn't perceive this situation as a discriminatory act. She considers it happens because people are still getting used to the presence of women in higher positions. Some interviewees, on the other hand, mentioned they already felt discriminated in their careers and at their workplaces, as stated before in the analysis. In most cases, discrimination was coming from a man, who was not used to see a woman taking care of her own business or having a higher work position than him. However, in some cases the interviewees mentioned they were also discriminated by other women. According to them, this would mainly happen because of jealousy, envy or because they felt confronted by another women's autonomy.

The greater discrimination example was given by interviewee 4, since her profession is connected to the body, and there is still a huge misconception of the massagist work:

"When I started my work in Vila Real I received some calls asking if I could do some erotic massage... After the first call, I cried a lot. I wasn't expecting anything like this, so I cried and cried. But it was somehow good, because I got prepared to the other calls" (Interviewee 4).

Other interviewees also mentioned some discrimination cases that occurred with them:

"I do feel some discrimination. Specially coming from men with a certain age, who believe that, because I am a woman, they can take advantage of it" (Interviewee 9).

Another related interesting observation mentioned by interviewee 5 was the tips received by the different genders in the restaurant at the end of the service. She stated that women are usually more prone to receive higher tips, "maybe because they are seen as more fragile" than men. Hence, the male again abuses his social status and therefore submits women to a discriminated and subordinated relation. From the interviewees' speeches it is perceived the existence of some informal discrimination (Bergano, 2012) in the Douro region, mainly regarding cases of moral harassment and, in the case of the massagist, sexual harassment as well.

Geographical and Cultural Context - Being a woman in the Douro region: Five out of nine of the interviewees said that they did not think life in Douro was different than in any other region of the country, as they think the problems, opportunities and difficulties are somewhat similar in other cities and villages:

"It is always complicated to be a woman anywhere: in the countryside, in the coast or in the big cities, no matter where, there is always some kind of harassment" (Interviewee 4).

It is important to remember that, due to the education trajectory of the interviewees, it is assumed that most of them already have the experience of living, travelling or visiting bigger cities and urban spaces. Nonetheless, for the other four interviewees, life in this region of the country is harder for a woman than for a man, and their statements were based mainly in two strands: the geographical and the historical/cultural particularities of the region.

Regarding the geographical aspect, the statements evoked characteristics as the small size of the cities in the NUT III, which are still underdeveloped in some terms when compared to the large cities such as Porto and Lisbon. On the cultural aspect, the strongest argument was the historically cultural construction, where man is still seen as the provider, the strong figure in the house and in the society:

"In the Douro region there is still a big stigma that a woman is weak and a man is strong. It is not easy to be a woman here" (Interviewee 6).

The social and historic construction of the region has affected women's lives in a large extent in the past decades and the effects and consequences of the long-time traditions are still perceived nowadays. Nonetheless, mutual consent was reached for most of the interviewees, regardless of the age or occupation, who stated they believe things are changing nowadays, as you can see a greater presence of women

in jobs and positions that was not possible to see few years ago. Tourism was also mentioned as a possible support to improve woman's life and reduce inequalities:

"As the tourism activity is growing in the region, conditions for women are getting better here." (Interviewee 5)

The same idea was shared by interviewee 1, who believes that a greater number of tourists in the region helps "opening the mind" of the local community, as they start to get used to different things. Their opinions, also shared by other interviewees, stimulate the view of tourism as a facilitator for local development and social change, bringing people from different backgrounds together, and even as a catalyst for peace and better mutual development of different societies (Wohlmuther & Wintersteiner, 2014). In the case of women in this study, tourism seems to be favourable to an empowerment through self-employment, given their profiles, but we consider that this idea is not generalizable to the whole workers, especially for women inserted occupationally as the main force in kitchens and cleanings.

5. Conclusions

The present study aimed to understand the perceptions of the tourism female workers in the Douro region to draw some conclusions about gender inequalities in their society. This study displayed that, in the opinion of the women interviewed, the reproduction of gender stereotypes is indeed very prominent. Based on the women's interviews we can conclude that, in their perspective, the historic context and the traditions of Douro's villages keep contributing to the endorsement of gender roles, leaving women in inferior and subordinated situations.

The work in the tourism industry has showed to be very demanding and arduous, despite the fact that most women interviewed still perform the double working journey at home. However, the household chores seem to be progressively starting to be divided between genders. From their perspective, discrimination against women seems to be also present in the Douro region, in a direct or indirect way, more intensely in the shape of moral harassment. This discrimination comes usually but not only from men, whereas also from women, who reproduce sexist discourses and incriminate social changes.

This research aimed as well to verify if the tourism industry has the capacity to empower women or if it only reproduces the social norm. Although some conclusions can be drawn in this sense, empowerment is a complex field and a deeper and greater research would have to be done in the Douro region, to understand to what extent the tourism industry is responsible for some progress in the gender equity and dismissal of inequalities in the area. Nevertheless, according to the interviewees'

perceptions, some progress regarding gender equality and the deconstruction of some pre-conceived attitudes and conceptions about where women should work or how they should act are starting to be perceived in the territory, especially between women with medium or high education levels, and women who have their own tourism business.

This research has theoretical implications for understanding how gender is influencing women's possibilities to work in tourism industry. Although generalizations cannot be made for the whole region, the subjective personal opinions of the female interviewed can provide some useful insights, particularly regarding the effects that the tourism activity can have in a female working population, and gives an overall indication of the obstacles and opportunities for women's equality in this sector.

Detailing the complex constraints and possibilities for the interviewed women working in the Douro region can provide useful development implications. There are still a number of obstacles that limit the ability of women to capture tourism-created opportunities. If benefits for women and their employment position in tourism industry want to be maximized, tourism development initiatives must be planned with careful consideration. Therefore, equal politics on gender issues are desired in the territory, aiming to face and challenge the easily perceived inequalities in the region.

This research was limited by time and budget, as well by the convenience sampling utilized. Furthermore, due to the usual limitations of any qualitative research, the findings cannot be generalized to all women living in the Douro region, as the perceptions about gender might vary if other groups were interviewed for this study. Moving forward, further research should aim to engage a greater number of interviewees, coming from a wider range of job and socioeconomic positions, in order to analyse their perceptions on the gender matter in the territory. As only female informants were included in the study, the study only reflects female views on female and male gender roles in Douro region. Further studies could also include the analysis of the perceptions of gender from the Douro's male population, letting us know if they are favourable or do not, about an equalitarian society, which would come together with a loss of masculine privileges. Moreover, studies focused on female empowerment and entrepreneurship would be of great contribution to the territory, as not many studies likewise had been done in the region yet.

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Chapter III