



The leaks in the pipeline and human capital management in tourism organizations

Las pérdidas en el camino hacia la dirección y la gestión del capital humano en las organizaciones turísticas

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Abstract

There are still barriers to equal opportunities for women in the tourism sector, which has a high feminization rate. Despite the higher education level in tourism, women face difficulty absorbing their human capital into the tourism labour market. This study aims to analyze the "leaky pipeline" phenomenon in managing organizations related to tourism, which refers to losing women throughout their careers towards better jobs. The study distributed 447 questionnaires to individuals with different job profiles (currently working, previously worked, or planning to work). Results showed that although the tourism sector is highly feminized, women face losses in the pipeline leading to management positions. The "Lost Talent" group, mainly consisting of highly educated women, indicated factors that hinder their career advancement, resulting in talent drain to other sectors. Conversely, the "Privileged Professionals" group, predominantly composed of men, faced no difficulties advancing in the labour market. This study confirms the leaky pipeline in a feminized sector and provides a foundation for targeted management models to address gender injustice and promote equal opportunities.

Key words:

Tourism, Tourism sector, Gender inequality, Leaky pipeline.

Resumen

En la actualidad, las barreras para alcanzar la igualdad de oportunidades siguen existiendo para las mujeres en el sector turístico, sector que presenta una alta tasa de feminización en la mayor parte de sus actividades. A pesar de que las mujeres presentan un nivel educativo específico significativamente superior con respecto al de los hombres en esta área, este capital humano femenino no es absorbido eficientemente por el mercado laboral turístico. A través de este estudio se pretende analizar el fenómeno denominado con el término "leaky pipeline" en la gestión de las organizaciones turísticas, el cual alude a las pérdidas que se producen en la trayectoria profesional de las mujeres en diversos puntos de sus carreras, principalmente en el acceso a mejores puestos de trabajo. Para alcanzar el objetivo planteado, se distribuyeron 447 cuestionarios entre personas con diferentes perfiles laborales (trabajando, que trabajaron y que trabajarán en el sector). Los resultados mostraron que se producen pérdidas de talento femenino en el camino que conduce a los puestos de dirección y de gestión. El grupo "Talento perdido", configurado por mujeres con un alto nivel de formación, indicó la existencia de factores que provocan la fuga de cerebros hacia otros sectores. Por el contrario, el grupo de "Profesionales privilegiados", compuesto en su mayoría por hombres, no encontró dificultades para progresar en el mercado laboral. Con lo cual, el estudio confirma la existencia de fugas de talento en un sector feminizado y sienta las bases para abordar modelos de gestión que superen la injusticia de género y promuevan la igualdad de oportunidades.

Palabras clave:

Leaky pipeline, desigualdad, perspectiva de género, gestión, sector turístico.

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Introduction

In the tourism industry, women constitute most of the workforce, but a large percentage are found in low-ranking positions (UNWTO, 2010; UNWTO, 2019). In comparison, men are over-represented in managerial positions, which leads to gender segregation, known as “pink ghetto” jobs. In addition, positions traditionally considered female and less qualified with poorer working conditions reinforce the existing gender order (Carvalho *et al.*, 2022). Various factors contribute to this, including career uncertainty, gender bias, and work-life balance challenges (Jeffrey, 2020; Chen *et al.*, 2021; Kourtesopoulou & Chatzigianni, 2021; Segovia-Pérez *et al.*, 2021). Carvalho *et al.*, (2019) also refer to an “ideal” worker with no family responsibilities and the belief that women are more focused on their families than their careers. It also includes the expectation that women are less capable than men and the tendency for men to form exclusive social networks that exclude women.

Women leaders are known for their willingness to innovate, attention to detail, and collaborative nature (Rodríguez-Díaz *et al.*, 2016; Jadnanansing *et al.*, 2021). In addition, Remington & Kitterlin-Lynch (2018) add that women leaders have a more participative leadership style. This is a recommended strategy for achieving “better job performance, high levels of commitment and organizational trust”, among other positive aspects. However, they are less likely to succeed as entrepreneurs, linked to gender-related profit-orientation challenges (Castrillón *et al.*, 2010).

Also, women’s representation in academic careers reveals the same pattern of “talent drain”. There is a significant presence of women in the undergraduate stage, but in the academic career, the numbers are reversed (Weigel, Kubik-Huch and Gebhard, 2019; MEFP, 2019). This context is mainly observed in STEM fields (Goulden *et al.*, 2011; Resmini, 2016; Howes *et al.*, 2018; Ysseldyk *et al.*, 2019), showing a similarly low representation in all categories of public university staff.

The “leaky pipeline” metaphor describes the phenomenon. It refers to losses in the pipeline to the top of the organization. It is often used to describe challenges where certain discriminated groups initially enter the pipeline (in this case, the tourism career) but drop out (“loss”) at later stages of the race (Minefe *et al.*, 2018).

Studies highlight the importance of addressing the impact of sexism, imposter syndrome, parental leave (Holmes, 2015), and social networks (Dutt, 2010; González-Álvarez and Solís-Rodríguez, 2011; Dutt *et al.*, 2016) on women’s career progression. Despite women’s high representation in undergraduate programs, they are underrepresented in academic careers, particularly in administrative and legal fields. Women also have a lower representation in public university staff, reinforcing the talent drain.

From this scenario, there is a similar situation in the tourism industry. Previous studies show that the tourism sector usually has a high percentage of women in training and a reversal of this percentage in the workplace (Carvalho *et al.*, 2018; Huete *et al.*, 2016; Soares *et al.*, 2017; Remington & Kitterlin-Lynch, 2018; Repetti & Hoffman, 2018). However, there is still a gap in testing ideas and suggestions for why tourism organizations’ ‘talent drain’ occurs. Thus, the driving research question is how the leaking pipeline occurs in the tourism industry. The research aims to analyze career leakage in the tourism industry.

Cluster analysis was used as the most appropriate way of distinguishing individuals according to their perceptions of a subject (Driver and Kroeber, 1932). This method is widely used in tourism research (Miller & Gibson, 2005; Varisco, 2007; Weiermair & Steinhäuser, 2003; Jackson & Murphy, 2002; Brown y Geddes, 2007; Domínguez, 2001; Medina *et al.*, 2020). Although no prior studies utilized this method to differentiate the behaviour of professionals at various stages of their careers in a specific area, this research makes a groundbreaking contribution. Another noteworthy contribution is using a tool that enables the differentiation of groups, thereby facilitating the comprehension of their heterogeneity. Applying this method revealed that women still face more significant challenges than men in advancing their careers.

Leaks in the pipeline and tourism

Most studies analyze the leakage in the academic career pipeline across various disciplines. However, few references exist to the leakage of qualified professionals from the labour market outside academia. Considering the lack of studies on the leakage of qualified professionals from the tourism labour market, it is interesting to analyze the existing literature and note that the allusion to this metaphor can also be extended to categories of professionals in the economic areas. In these areas, the profession is still marked by a strong gender imbalance, accentuated proportionally to the evolution of the professional career, especially in positions of greater power, such as in the tourism sector (Carparelli, 2018; Clevenger & Singh, 2013; Cave & Silic, 2010; Carvalho, 2014).

In this regard, Paulus *et al.* (2016) attempted to identify gender differences in academic promotion in a teaching hospital in Boston, USA. Although most of the academic body was constituted of women, they only filled the basic position of assistant professor in most cases. Following this line of research, Ysseldyk *et al.* (2019) investigated the factors that impact the mental health of postdoctoral women, which may contribute to their evading from academia, using a social identity approach. The study discovered that postdoctoral work is stressful and emotionally challenging for women, regardless of their academic background or nationality. The study also emphasizes that identifying with the academic discipline could be a protective factor for mental health, which may lower the number of female postdoctoral researchers leaving the academic environment.

In the academic field, we can also cite the literature review conducted by Polkowska (2013), aimed at identifying the barriers encountered by women scientists in the transfer of scientific knowledge, which ultimately generates the leaks in the pipeline at this stage of the career (usually one of the last stages) when the accumulated knowledge can be negotiated. The author reveals fewer women than men at this stage of the scientific career. A significant salary gap deprives them of opportunities, ultimately generating deep frustration. In some cases, this frustration is generated not only by the injustices of the corporate management model but also by the student body. As Chen and Hune (2011) denounce, the pipeline leaks of Asian American women professors in U.S. universities are due to the discriminatory behaviour of the student body based on race, gender, and their "presumed" foreign training.

Makarova, Aeschlimann and Herzog's (2016) study examined the experiences of female students in STEM fields, which are traditionally male-dominated careers. The study uncovered various gender processes during the educational period, revealing several mechanisms and symbolic actions

contributing to the reproduction of masculine culture in these professions. It also sheds light on the different strategies that women must adopt to adapt to the demands of professional and educational life and avoid losing ground.

On the other hand, Chesler *et al.* (2010) conducted research demonstrating the continuous existence of leaks in the pipeline in the biomedical sector, where there is a higher representation of women than in other technical areas. However, women are still underrepresented in proportion to the U.S. population, especially at the M.S. and PhD levels, relative to the faculty and research of U.S. biomedical engineering schools. Notably, women's interest in pursuing biomedical engineering degrees is declining. The obstacles to achieving gender equity in STEM disciplines are significant. They are likely to play a role in the continued absence of women at all levels of the STEM sector.

Similarly, Chesler *et al.* (2010) and Shaw and Stanton (2012) conclude that the low number of female graduates in STEM courses will have lasting repercussions on the gender diversity of faculty in these disciplines. According to Luckenbill-Edds (2002), this lower interest of women in scientific areas is due to a mentality that tends to eliminate potential future scientists already in introductory courses to science, where a highly competitive environment is promoted, constantly seeking to achieve high academic standards, which ends up frustrating the learning process.

Tourism is also a largely feminized area and (Soares, Gabriel & Romo, 2017; 2018), the underrepresentation of women in senior positions should not exist, but it does (Huete *et al.*, 2016; Kourtesopoulou & Chatzigianni, 2021).

According to Carvalho *et al.* (2019), gendering processes in tourism organizations can reproduce gender inequality by embedding patterns of female submission and male dominance. Discrimination, mainly hidden discrimination, is related to three types of concealed and power-based processes called "gender subtexts". These subtexts include the gendered notion of the 'ideal' worker, the assumption that women are less competent than men for management, and male homosocial ties and exclusionary practices. These processes operate silently in organizations and constrain women's possibilities in tourism by reproducing gender power relations and reinforcing gendered social divisions.

In Spain, Garrido and Higuera (2000) have been discussing gender differences in selection processes since the early 2000s, concluding that women are underrepresented in many areas, including the service sector. In Turkey, Cave and Kilic (2010) analyze vertical and horizontal segregation in the tourism sector from a gender perspective, examining aspects such as promotion. They conclude that these two phenomena do not stem from factors such as training. Additionally, Pinar *et al.* (2011) point out that the hotel industry in Turkey does not offer attractive promotion conditions for women, which makes them consider leaving the sector.

In Jordan, Koburtay and Syed (2020) reveal that prejudices towards women and negative evaluations of them as leaders in the workplace impede their career advancement towards leadership positions in the hotel sector. Likewise, Kourtesopoulou and Chatzigianni (2021) found that prejudices become barriers, such as sociocultural norms and gender role stereotypes, difficulty balancing work and home obligations, and underrepresentation in senior management positions.

Therefore, research in numerous tourism destinations supports the existence of gender inequalities in leadership positions or access to them (Carvalho, Costa & Torres, 2022; Carvalho, Costa, Lykke & Torres, 2014; Carvalho, Costa, Lykke & Torres, 2019; Carvalho, Costa, Lykke, Torres & Wahl, 2018; Chen *et al.*, 2021; Elkhewesky *et al.*, 2019; Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2020; Huete *et al.*, 2016; Jadnanansing *et al.*, 2021; Koburtay & Syed, 2020; Pinar *et al.*, 2011).

Repetti and Hoffman (2018) found that the percentage of women in vice president or director positions was significantly less than at the manager level, indicating vertical gender segregation or the leaky pipeline phenomenon. The authors argue that having just a few female leaders in a company may be a tokenism that does not address the underlying issues of a fair and equal workforce. They suggest that more gaming companies should follow the example of Wynn Resorts and increase female representation in leadership positions. The authors argue that the casino industry has the opportunity to become a pioneer in ending the gender leadership gap with the support of sound academic research.

In short, leaks in the pipeline, regardless of the metaphor or working area, refer to the loss of resources, talents, and skills. At the same time, they are still considered active in the labour market. As noted in the literature, the mechanisms that cause this leakage come from different causes and present diverse characteristics that can be partially controversial (Carporelli, 2018). For this author, one mechanism that hinders women's careers is the "men choose men" or Old Boys Club dynamics. This type of behaviour has been the research subject in other studies (Borgatti & Foster, 2003; Katz, Walker, and Hindman, 2018). People of the same sex usually form informal networks due to affinity, more significant presence, or other factors. This lack of networks directly impacts the promotion of women to managerial positions (Kattara, 2005). In addition, as long as men dominate positions of power and responsibility, women will inevitably face discriminatory evaluations (Alonso *et al.*, 2009), which characterize the challenge of equal opportunities in job growth.

Furthermore, there is a paradox in the tourism sector, where certain activities traditionally considered feminine, such as being a chef, are predominantly managed by men (Jeffrey *et al.*, 2018). However, despite this feminization, women are still underrepresented in senior positions in tourism, as demonstrated by Huete *et al.* (2016). Furthermore, Figueroa-Domecq *et al.* (2020) suggest a direct relationship between the technological level of the companies and the lower participation of women on management teams and boards of directors.

This scenario highlights the need for further research into the career barriers that cause gender occupational segregation and the existence of gender stereotypes and implicit biases.

Methodological design

The application of cluster analysis provides insights into business competitiveness (Morgan *et al.*, 2020), which is advantageous for analyzing the reasons for the leaky pipeline and the loss of female talent within tourism corporations. Moreover, cluster analysis allows the development of a basis for tourism business management and planning by segmenting groups according to common perceptions (Soares *et al.*, 2022). In this case, professionals related to the tourism industry were grouped to address gender inequality, which causes the loss of talent from a gender perspective.

Using cluster analysis in the tourism industry is rare and novel since this approach is typically used to investigate industrial clusters (Morgan *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, limitations were found in fully adapting the industrial cluster methods to the tourism industry due to the lack of previous applications.

Regarding the construction of this study, primary and secondary sources were used. First, a questionnaire was created and administered between February and August 2018 to individuals related to the tourism industry who work, have worked, or will work in the Galicia region of Spain. To ensure the inclusion of only those who meet the criteria, an initial pre-question filter out the respondents who do not have a working relationship with the tourism industry.

The study obtained 447 completed questionnaires, each consisting of 23 items. In addition, a pretest was conducted with 11 individuals of different levels of education, social class, age, and gender. Since the questionnaire was conducted online, it was mandatory to answer all questions to progress and complete it.

The strategy employed to obtain a maximum number of responses consisted of three stages. Firstly, the questionnaire was sent to all companies with a direct relationship with the Faculty of Tourism of the University of A Coruña (UDC), requesting the participation of their team of workers. Secondly, contact was made with associations related to the sector, such as tourist guides, restaurants, accommodation, intermediation, and consultancy. Furthermore, the questionnaire was sent via e-mail with the name of each association to obtain a more personalized treatment. Finally, professionals from different activities in the tourism sector were contacted and asked to collaborate by sharing the questionnaire on their personal and professional social networks (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or Instagram).

The questionnaire was based on previous studies on the perception of male and female workers regarding leadership, well-being, and equality in the tourism industry (Goldenberg *et al.*, 2010; Sousa, Monteiro, Machado & Luis, 2014; Bain, 2013; Bañuelos & Reynoso, 2016; Social Dialogue and Equality in Business, 2008). The questionnaire was structured with categories and organized using a five-level Likert scale, ranging from “totally disagree” to “totally agree”. In addition, sociodemographic questions were also included to capture information about age, sex, level of education, family income, occupation, place of residence, and length of service in the sector.

Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS software (version 24), applying the following statistical procedures: 1) Calculation of univariate statistical data for all questionnaire items in the first stage, and 2) Unidirectional ANOVA analysis in the second stage, where we considered the profile of the labour relationship with the tourism sector (studies, works or has worked). This analysis aimed to identify the perception of the subjects by grouping them into different moments of their working lives. Applying this type of mixed study is unusual because only 9.2% of studies dealing with gender inequalities in tourism have used it. However, it is necessary to consider its use in this study as an effective analysis tool for perceptions (Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2020).

Profile of the surveyed subjects

Regarding the sociodemographic profile, 76.3% of the responses were provided by women, slightly higher than the 58% recorded in 2018 by the Study on Employment in the Spanish Tourism Sector (Exceltur, 2018). This is not surprising, considering that most tourism professionals are women.

Most respondents (54.8%) fell into the age range of 25 to 57 years old (table 1). Almost all responses came from subjects with specific training in tourism, representing 92.4% of the sample. In terms of the level of education, 68% had university studies (both completed and in progress), while 24.6% had attained or were in the process of attaining a master's or PhD degree. The sample's next most common level of education was vocational training, accounting for 5% of the total. These data highlight the high level of training in the sector. Most of the subjects (77%) resided in the province of A Coruña, followed by Pontevedra (12.5%), the province of Lugo (5%), and Ourense (2.7%). These provinces have the most significant presence in tourism, according to IGE (2019). As for marital status, 68% of the subjects were single, 16% were married, and 5% lived with their partner. Notably, 44% were preparing to enter the labour market in the tourism sector. Of those in the market, the most represented subsector was accommodation, followed by intermediation, with 13% and 9.5%, respectively. Regarding seniority in the sector, only 14% had been working for less than one year, and the most representative group had 3 to 5 years of seniority (14%). However, seniority was considered relevant, as more than 29% of the subjects had worked in the sector for over three years. It was found that 29% of the total had a male superior. When asked whether they preferred a male or female superior, 68% responded that they would prefer a female.

Table 1. Profile of the surveyed subjects

	N	%		N	%
Gender			Link with the tourist industry		
Man	102	22.8	Work	172	38.5
Woman	341	73.3	I worked	78	17.4
No response	4	0.9	I will work	197	44.1
Age group			Province		
17-24	202	45.2	Coruña	345	77.2
25-57	245	54.8	Pontevedra	56	12.5
Older than 65	15	2.5	Lugo	23	5.1
Level of education			Ourense	12	2.7
Basic / Secondary	6	1.3	No answers	11	2.5
Vocational Training	24	5.3	Monthly family income		
Undergraduate	307	68.7	Studying	197	44.1
Master's/Doctorate	110	24.6	Less de 500 Euros	18	4
			501-1000 Euros	96	21.5
			1001-1500 Euros	96	21.5
			1501-2500 Euros	38	8.5
			2501-5000 Euros	2	0.4

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the sample collected.

The rest of the sociodemographic characteristics lead us to consider that we are dealing with a sample corresponding to the middle class.

Results: Perception of Equal Opportunities

Table 2 shows the results for the 23 statements and the responses to the items related to equal opportunities in the tourism sector in Galicia. An examination of the available data reveals that, in general, there was no consensus in the responses. On the contrary, the perceptions are more discordant than concordant.

In addition, it should be noted that all the means were considerably low and, in some cases, closer to the central measure of the scale. First, if we focus on the highest mean, individuals indicate that "There are clear promotion opportunities for positions without gender preference" (3.93). Secondly, the highest mean corresponds to the following statement: "The tourism area offers more opportunities for men in higher positions".

Although women constituted the majority of the sample in this study, which is consistent with the gender distribution of the tourism industry, it is possible that the opportunities available in the industry are not as equal as they claimed to be in the first question. This is because women in the study reported perceiving that men hold more influential positions in high levels of the organization, which is consistent with findings from previous tourism studies (Huete *et al.*, 2016; Carvalho *et al.*, 2022).

To further explore this issue, the study compares with what has been documented about gender inequality in the STEM field. In line with this comparison, Carperelli (2018) suggests a more significant gender imbalance in positions of power, while Paulus *et al.* (2016) observe a low representation of women in STEM faculty. It should be noted, however, that this inequality differs to some extent in the tourism industry.

By analyzing the lowest averages, we see that participants perceived that some job tasks were not compensated. Specifically, "I perform an unpaid position of responsibility" had the lowest mean, indicating that individuals carried out duties typically associated with higher positions without receiving payment. This situation is related to labour precariousness, which is a factor that causes women to give up their professional careers, as highlighted by Ysseldyc *et al.* (2019) in the STEM field. However, it is essential to note that the student group did not answer the question regarding unpaid positions, as they have not yet entered the workforce.

The second lowest mean was obtained for the statements "The tourism industry provides more opportunities for men in lower positions" and "The tourism industry provides more opportunities for women in higher positions". In both cases, more than 90% disagree with these statements. This disagreement suggests that men and women (regardless of whether they are working, have worked or are waiting to enter the labour market) do not perceive that women have more opportunities at the top of the organizational pyramid in the sector nor that men have more opportunities in the lower positions. Thus, women already perceive the difficulty of accessing leadership positions, meaning they start from a demotivating context. This situation would fit in with Polkowska (2013) and Chen and Hune (2011), who points out that the frustration women feel in the face of unequal access causes

them to give up their professional careers. Furthermore, it reflected in the subjects' perception that there is no effort in the sector to promote women, even though they are qualified; therefore, a facilitator of leaks in the pipeline was detected.

Table 2. Results for the 23 statements in terms of perception of equality

	1(%)	2(%)	3(%)	4(%)	5(%)	Average	Standard deviation
V1. Clear promotion opportunities exist for positions without gender preference.	9.2	25.1	31.3	22.4	12.1	3.93	1.152
V2. We always find opportunities to change sectors when necessary.	15.9	33.6	31.8	14.8	4	2.57	1.049
V3. They offer opportunities for professional qualification and requalification.	9.2	26.4	34.5	21.9	8.1	2.93	1.082
V4. We always find opportunities and receive invitations to participate in working groups and projects.	10.1	28.2	34.5	18.8	8.5	2.87	1.095
V5. There is a perceived interest on the part of the company in promoting women to senior positions.	21.7	29.5	23.3	15.7	5.8	2.54	1.161
V6. Is there any perceived impediment to the promotion of women to higher positions within the company.	19	26	20.6	21	13.4	2.84	1.321
V7. Team competency evaluations are based on equality criteria.	9.6	21.9	34	18.3	16.1	3.09	1.194
V8. Leadership positions are equally filled by men and women.	33.8	26	20.6	10.3	9.4	2.36	1.295
V9. Equal pay for men and women is perceived in the corporate environment.	31.5	22.8	20.1	13	12.5	2.52	1.377
V10. The corporate organization offers mutual respect and trust to both men and women.	11.4	21.5	24.2	21.9	21	3.2	1.303
V11. There are incentives on the part of the organization to ensure pluralization between men and women.	19.5	27.3	35.8	8.9	8.5	2.6	1.150
V12. Women receive the same treatment as men in the work environment.	19	28.2	18.3	15.2	19.2	2.87	1.397
V13. The tourism area offers more opportunities for women in lower positions.	7.8	13	27.7	26	25.5	3.48	1.222
V14. Tourism offers more opportunities for women in top positions.	29.1	34	28.4	5.6	2.9	2.19	1.013
V15. The area of tourism offers more opportunities for men in the lower positions.	31.5	30.9	27.7	7.6	2.2	2.18	1.033
V16. The tourism field offers more opportunities for men in higher positions.	5.8	11	19.5	32.2	31.5	3.73	1.184
V17. Corporate culture of the company provides more opportunities for women.	18.6	37.6	34	6.7	3.1	2.38	0.965
V18. The company's corporate culture provides more opportunities for men.	7.8	10.7	35.3	28.6	17.4	3.37	1.127
V19. Differentiated hiring and recruitment policies are in place for men and women.	23.5	22.4	28.6	13.4	12.1	2.68	1.298
V20. There are wage inequalities between men and women in the same or equivalent positions.	19.9	11.6	20.6	23.3	24.6	3.21	1.446

	1(%)	2(%)	3(%)	4(%)	5(%)	Average	Standard deviation
V21. The company develops a policy to encourage gender diversity and equity between the sexes, as well as to combat different forms of prejudice.	25.3	26.8	31.8	11.6	4.5	2.43	1.120
V22. The vocabulary used in internal selections includes men and women (sales manager, section manager, department manager, etc.).	28	22.4	26	11.6	12.1	2.57	1.329
V23. I perform functions inherent to a position of responsibility for which I do not receive any type of remuneration (*).	8.5	5.4	11.6	14.3	16.1	1.92	1.997

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the sample collected (*this question is not related to who is studying).

Anova test

Once the ANOVA analysis was carried out, some statistically significant differences were found. For example, in the analysis of the variable "Relationship with the tourism industry at present: I work, I worked, and I will work (studying tourism)", significant differences were found. However, no significant differences were found for 7 of the 23 items. Therefore, the results of the ANOVA test (table 3) indicate that, regardless of employment status, individuals' perceptions coincide in 7 of the 23 statements.

Table 3. Coincide in the perception according to the employment relationship (works, has worked, studies, etc.)

	I work	I worked	I will work	F-ratio	P-value
V5. There is a perceived interest on the part of the company in promoting women to senior positions.	2.7	2.44	2.45	2.484	0.085
V13. The tourism area offers more opportunities for women in lower positions.	3.45	3.51	3.48	0.087	0.917
V14. Tourism offers more opportunities for women in top positions.	2.17	2.03	2.27	1.731	0.178
V15. The area of tourism offers more opportunities for men in the lower positions.	2.1	2.15	2.26	1.056	0.349
V16. The tourism field offers more opportunities for men in higher positions.	3.66	3.9	3.72	1.071	0.343
V17. Corporate culture of the company provides more opportunities for women.	2.45	2.15	2.41	2.762	0.064
V18. The company's corporate culture provides more opportunities for men.	3.27	3.51	3.41	1.442	0.237

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the sample collected.

This study's participants disagree that the Galician tourism sector aims to advance women into higher positions. On the one hand, they perceive that the highest positions are for men since they agree with statements V. 16, V. 18, and V. 13. On the other hand, they come to this conclusion because they do not share the idea that tourism offers more opportunities for women in higher positions (V. 14), nor that opportunities for men are found in lower positions (V. 15), nor that the corporate culture of the companies provides more opportunities for women (V. 17). This last point

reaffirms the existence of factors identified as leaks in the pipeline in the tourism sector. To correct this leak, Weigel, Kubik-Huch and Gebhard (2019) propose collaborative measures that facilitate taking advantage of its potential. These measures could be translated into institutional and private cooperation in the sector, given that the results are not being perceived where it exists.

When analyzing whether there are differences between pairs (Work-I worked, Work-I will work, Work-I worked-I will work) (table 4), it was identified that all groups present different opinions for V19 (There are differentiated hiring and recruitment policies for men and women) and V20 (There are wage inequalities between men and women in the same or equivalent positions). It is noticeable that those still going to access the tourism labour market perceive unfairness, given that they present a higher average concerning these variables.

Concerning the perception of item V19, a similarity is found with other sectors. Navarro-Astor *et al.* (2016) point out barriers to job access. It could be a cause for leaving the sector even before entering the workplace, originated by the perception that the selection process does not follow equality criteria between men and women. Pinar *et al.* (2011), Jeffrey (2020), Segovia-Pérez *et al.* (2021) and Chen *et al.* (2021) associate this with the difficulty of reconciling work and personal life.

As for item V20, a cause linked to frustration leading to career abandonment is again detected (Polkowska, 2013). If women entering the labour market perceive the gender pay gap, they might avoid setting high goals since their efforts would not be fairly rewarded. However, those already working in the tourism sector perceive these injustices less, as they have the lowest average in these items.

Table 4. Perception by cluster (percentage of agreement)^a and average score)

	Cluster 1, n = 172 Privileged professional 38,50%		Cluster 2, n = 78 Lost talent 17,40%		Cluster 3, n = 197 Optimistic Future 44,10%		F-ratio	P-valor
	Agree %	Average	Agree %	Average	Agree %	Average		
V1. Clear promotion opportunities exist for positions without gender preference.	41.9	3.26	30.8	2.82	29.4	2.92	5.629	0.004
V2. We always find opportunities to change sectors when necessary.	18.6	2.50	15.4	2.26	20.3	2.77	7.527	0.001
V3. They offer opportunities for professional qualification and requalification.	31.4	2.92	17.9	2.46	33.5	3.13	11.248	0.000
V4. We always find opportunities and receive invitations to participate in working groups and projects.	4.4	2.73	17.9	2.41	33.5	3.18	17.453	0.000
V6. Is there any perceived impediment to the promotion of women to higher positions within the company.	22.1	2.37	25.6	2.67	48.7	3.31	26.997	0.000
V7. Team competency evaluations are based on equality criteria.	44.2	3.31	30.8	2.90	27.4	2.98	4.963	0.007

	Cluster 1, n = 172 Privileged professional 38,50%		Cluster 2, n = 78 Lost talent 17,40%		Cluster 3, n = 197 Optimistic Future 44,10%		F-ratio	P-valor
	Agree %	Average	Agree %	Average	Agree %	Average		
V8. Leadership positions are equally filled by men and women.	31.4	2.72	15.4	2.18	22	2.11	11.739	0.000
V9. Equal pay for men and women is perceived in the corporate environment.	41.9	3.15	23.1	2.41	24	2.02	36.593	0.000
V10. The corporate organization offers mutual respect and trust to both men and women.	61.6	3.74	41.0	2.95	27.4	2.82	27.988	0.000
V11. There are incentives on the part of the organization to ensure pluralization between men and women.	23.3	2.71	10.3	2.31	15.2	2.61	3.347	0.036
V12. Women receive the same treatment as men in the work environment.	53.5	3.49	33.3	2.59	18.3	2.45	30.875	0.000
V19. Differentiated hiring and recruitment policies are in place for men and women.	16.3	2.21	25.6	2.67	33.5	3.10	23.951	0.000
V20. There are wage inequalities between men and women in the same or equivalent positions.	30.2	2.59	48.7	3.28	62.9	3.72	31.949	0.000
V21. The company develops a policy to encourage gender diversity and equity between the sexes, as well as to combat different forms of prejudice.	18.6	2.40	10.3	2.13	16.3	2.58	4.85	0.008
V22. The vocabulary used in internal selections includes men and women (sales manager, section manager, department manager, etc.).	36.0	2.87	17.9	2.15	15.2	2.48	9.012	0.000
V23. I perform functions inherent to a position of responsibility for which I do not receive any type of remuneration(*).	53.5	3.38	56.4	3.54	-	-	60.733	0.000

^aPercentage of agreement: answers ranging from 4 to 5 on a 5-point scale.

^bThe scale ranges from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the sample collected. (*this question is not re-lated to who is studying).

When comparing the perceptions of those who work and those who have worked in the tourism sector, we detected that they agree that there are several injustices in the industry. Specifically, both disagree with the opportunities detailed in V.2 and V.4 (González-Álvarez and Solís-Rodríguez, 2011). However, on the other hand, both agree with another perceived injustice, as they agree with the statement V.23: "I perform the functions of a position of responsibility for which I do not receive any type of remuneration". This statement leads us to think that people who have not yet come into contact with the world of work have an idea that there is equality, and we can even affirm that they are quite optimistic. However, through the perception of those who have already had an employment relationship, a sector still permeated by gender injustices is perceived.

Likewise, a difference in perception can be seen in item V.11: "There are incentives on the part of the organization to ensure pluralization between men and women". Those who work in the area have a more favourable impression in this aspect, which leads us to believe that, despite injustices, the Galician tourism company has been betting on this pluralization. In this case, the differences in perception are likely because the employment relationship of those who no longer work in the sector ended before the development of public policies in the framework of equal opportunities in Spain.

Comparing the perceptions between individuals currently working in the sector and those who are still to be incorporated (tourism students), in addition to the coincidences referred to in the first analysis (where the perception of all subjects coincides), we observe that these two groups perceive that in the Galician tourism sector, the following are true: They offer opportunities for professional qualification and retraining (V.3) indistinctly. In this sense, they rule out the existence of discrimination in the provision of training by the company.

Comparing the subjects who no longer work in the sector (I worked) and those who will be incorporated (I will work), we find a divergence in the perception that the company has a policy to encourage gender diversity and equity between the sexes and combat different forms of prejudice (V.21). The first group (I worked) is less upbeat in its perception. All this leads us to conclude that the difference occurs because there was no equality in the past for people who no longer work in the sector. This dynamic confirms the brain drain in this sector, characterizing the leaks in the pipeline. However, it should be noted that the following question was not asked: "Why do you no longer work in the tourism sector?" Since this question could clarify some of the unknowns regarding the divergences in the perceptions.

Finally, the profiles "I worked" and "I will work" coincide with the positive perception of V1. There are clear promotion opportunities for positions without gender preference, V7. Evaluations of team competencies based on equality criteria and V10. The corporate organization offers mutual respect and trust to men and women. However, negative perceptions again coincide in the following items, only this time they are presented in disagreement with V9. There is perceived wage equality between men and women in the corporate environment, V12. Women are treated equally with men in the work environment and V22. The vocabulary used in internal selections includes men and women (sales manager, section manager, department manager, etc.). Although they do not perceive that women's work is evaluated with different criteria than men's, they do not feel they are treated the same. In addition, at the internal corporate level, the use of inclusive language for promotion is not perceived. These items corroborate the perception of a pay gap within the corporate environment.

Individual analysis of the groups according to the employment relationship with tourism I work, have worked or will work

Analyzing the means of the 16 items that differentiate the three clusters made it possible to characterize each group based on the concordance or discrepancy they presented concerning the variables. In this sense, these three statistically distinct groups were analyzed, and the following behavioural profiles were identified about the perception of gender equality in the Galician tourism industry - Leaks in the Pipeline:

Cluster 1. Currently Working (Privileged Professional): These individuals show a privileged and very positive attitude towards the Galician tourism sector. All aspects were highly valued. On the one hand, they agree with the statements related to the existence of equality. However, they disagree with statements regarding gender discrimination in tourism. Likewise, they perceive that the sector generates the same promotion opportunities for men and women and that equitable criteria are applied for competence evaluations. They also consider that there is a balance between men and women in management and decision-making positions. They also perceive equal pay, feel that the organization respects and treats them in a non-discriminatory manner, whether men or women and that pluralization is encouraged. Also, working people identify that the company uses non-sexist vocabulary in internal promotion applications. The people currently working do not identify discrimination in hiring or recruitment nor a gender pay gap in equivalent positions. Nor do they identify barriers to further growth within the company and do not believe they perform tasks typical of senior positions without being remunerated.

Cluster 2. Labor (Lost talent): This group includes individuals with a greater conviction that there is a lack of gender equality in the Galician tourism industry. They present a vision of the sector in which equality is not contemplated. They perceive that there are preferences for internal promotion, criteria do not govern competence evaluations based on equality, and the organization does not encourage equality. They also state that they do not feel that there is inclusive language in the applications offered for internal promotion. They also detect considerable difficulty in changing subsectors and a lack of opportunities for training and professional improvement. Nor do they see any facilities for participating in working groups or invitations. For this group, the Galician tourism company does not develop equality policies to stimulate diversity and gender equity or combat different forms of prejudice.

Cluster 3. Will work (Optimistic Future): Regarding the perceptions of this group, it should be noted that there is a paradigm shift since it is optimistic. They identify the tourism industry with equality problems since they perceive some barriers to promotion for women and the existence of differentiated hiring policies. They do not see gender equality in leadership positions, the treatment given to women and men, or salary equality. However, this group is most convinced about some positive aspects of the behaviour of tourism organizations. They consider that there are possibilities to change sub-sectors when necessary, that tourism organizations offer training opportunities and that they consider their knowledge when making decisions. The individuals in this group feel that the company develops policies to encourage diversity and gender equity and fights against prejudices that may occur in the workplace. However, this vision shown by this group is very positive since they will be the ones who will manage the organizations soon, and this perception may be an indicator that the situation may change in a short period.

Table 5 below shows the profile of each of the clusters regarding their participation in the tourism industry: Privileged Professional, Lost Talent, and Optimistic Future.

Table 5. Demographic profile of the surveyed subjects by cluster

	Privileged professional		Lost talent		Optimistic Future		Chi-square	P-value
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
	172	38,50%	78	17,4%	197	44,1%		
<i>Gender</i>							7.793	0.099
Men	46	26.7	14	17.9	42	21.3		
Women	126	73.3	64	82.1	151	76.7		
<i>Age</i>							399.298	0.000
<18	-	-	-	-	44	22.3		
18-24	14	8.1	6	7.7	138	70.1		
25-29	18	10.5	14	17.9	11	5.6		
30-39	96	55.8	38	48.7	4	2.0		
40-44	22	12.7	10	12.8	-	-		
>44	22	12.7	10	12.8	-	-		
<i>Level of studies</i>							454.084	0.000
Basic	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Secondary	6	3.4	-	-	-	-		
University	84	48.8	38	48.7	185	93.9		
FP	14	8.1	4	5.1	6	3.0		
Masters/Doctors	68	39.5	36	46.2	6	3.0		
<i>Specific training</i>							32.948	0.045
Yes	152	88.4	64	82.1	197	100.0		
No	20	11.6	14	17.9	-	-		
<i>Province</i>							31.914	0.000
A Coruña	122	70.9	52	66.7	171	86.8		
Lugo	10	5.8	2	2.6	11	5.6		
Ourense	8	4.7	2	2.6	2	1.1		
Pontevedra	26	15.1	20	25.6	10	5.1		
<i>Marital status</i>							123.868	0.000
Single	96	55.8	34	43.6	167	84.8		
Married	38	22.1	34	43.6	-	-		
Domestic partner	8	4.7	-	-	14	7.1		
Living with a partner	26	15.1	10	12.8	6	3		
Divorced	4	2.3	-	-	-	-		
<i>Subsector</i>							510.072	0.000
Lodging	38	22.1	20	25.6	-	-		
Travel Agency	36	20.9	6	7.7	-	-		
Guide	20	11.6	2	2.6	-	-		
Restoration	10	5.8	18	23.1	-	-		
Transport	8	4.7	8	10.3	-	-		
Public Administration	22	12.8	4	5.1	-	-		
Consulting	12	7.0	2	2.6	-	-		

	Privileged professional		Lost talent		Optimistic Future		Chi-square	P-value
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
	172	38,50%	78	17,4%	197	44,1%		
Education	6	3.5	6	7.7	-	-		
Information	20	11.6	12	15.4	-	-		
Studying	-		-	-	197	100		
Seniority							494.084	0.000
Less than 1 year	40	23.3	24	30.8	-	-		
1 to 2 years	28	16.3	30	38.5	-	-		
3 to 5 years	46	26.7	16	20.6	-	-		
6 to 10 years	30	17.4	6	7.7	-	-		
11 to 15 years	12	7.0	-	-	-	-		
More than 15 years	16	9.3	2	2.6	-	-		
Income							496.176	0.000
Under 500€	4	2.3	14	17.9	-	-		
501€-1000€	60	34.4	36	46.2	-	-		
1001€-1500€	76	44.2	20	25.6	-	-		
1501€-2500€	30	17.4	8	10.3	-	-		
2501€-5000€	2	1.2	-	-	-	-		

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the sample collected.

Cluster 1. Considering the profile of this cluster, it can be affirmed that it is the most privileged. The group, called Privileged Professionals, presents a more significant presence of men than the other clusters, representing almost 30% of the total subjects. This group comprises subjects mainly residing in the provinces of A Coruña and Pontevedra, whose most representative age is between 30 and 39 years old (55.8%), and most are single. In addition, it is the cluster where there is a higher concentration of people with vocational training, and compared to Cluster 2, its members have higher specific training in the area. They also have a high level of seniority in the company, with more than 34% have been with the same company for over six years. Another noteworthy fact is that many subjects work in travel agencies or as tour guides. Finally, it should be noted that they are the group with the highest salaries; at least 60% receive a salary of between 1 000 and 2 500 euros. Thus, the percentage of people receiving more than 1 500 euros per month is double that of the other groups.

Cluster 2. The Lost Talent group has the highest female representation, with almost 82% of the subjects being women. They reside mainly in the province of A Coruña. It should also be noted that it is one of the groups where the most significant number of responses were obtained from women living in the province of Pontevedra. The age range in which this group can be included is 25 to 39 years old, the peak of a professional career. It stands out as a group with a predominance of married people, which makes it the group with the highest number of married women. In addition, this cluster is characterized by being made up of highly qualified professionals. 95% of those surveyed have university and post-university training, and almost 50% have a master's or doctorate. Along the same lines, 82% have specific training in the tourism sector. This talent was lost in the tourism industry; this

loss can be related to the low rate of seniority in the companies. Almost 70% worked in the tourism industry for less than two years, and only 10% stated that they remained in the same company for over five years. Most of the positions held by these professionals were in the subsectors of lodging, catering, and tourist information. Another aspect that defines this group is the precariousness of salaries; 64% of the subjects in this cluster received salaries of less than 1 000 euros per month.

Cluster 3. The main characteristic of the Optimistic Future group profile is that it comprises tourism students from different educational levels: vocational training, university, and postgraduate. Similarly, it should be noted that the majority are students are undergraduates. As in the previous groups, women predominate. They took graduation in tourism and are between 18 and 24 years of age. This age range corresponds to the university stage. Although the other sociodemographic variables are not used in this case, it can be said that the profile of its members is linked to optimism regarding their future employment. Two main reasons stand out, firstly, they identify the problems of gender injustice in tourism, and secondly, they perceive that the companies are working to minimize and correct these injustices.

Conclusions

Cluster analysis provided the basis for a focused approach to gender injustices by segmenting professionals into groups based on shared perceptions of unequal organizational opportunities. Although there is no homogeneous perception, it can be concluded that the subjects disagree with the idea that the tourism industry is interested in promoting women to positions of greater responsibility and decision-making. Instead, they all associate women with lower positions and men with higher positions, and these aspects are entirely related to the factors identified as leaks in the pipeline.

This study explored the perceptions of three groups (distributed according to employment relationship: currently working, left this sector, will still access it) on equality in the tourism industry. It was found that the group currently employed in the sector (Privileged Professionals) has a more positive perception. In contrast, the group that no longer works in the tourism sector (Lost Talents) has a more negative perception of equality of opportunity between men and women. Of the three clusters, the Privileged Professionals cluster shows a higher male representation, while the Lost Talents cluster has the highest number of women. This finding leads to the conclusion that leaks in the pipeline exist in the Galician tourism industry.

However, this study allows us to draw hopeful conclusions regarding the future generation of professionals. The Optimistic Future group has an excellent consideration of the labour market to which they will soon have access. However, they are also very critical because they identify injustices that should be minimized. All of this, combined with a recent education in the values of real equal opportunities in today's society, can help to bring about reforms in the organizational behaviour that creates barriers to women's careers. A positive attitude for equity, as it will be the group that leads companies shortly.

As for the practical application of this research, it could fall to avoid the leaks in the pipeline as a facilitating measure for configuring a management model with highly qualified personnel, combining high training with an empathetic, collaborative, low hierarchical, people-oriented leadership style. This style is closer to the characteristics of the female stereotype. Tourism companies could start recruiting by opting for the Blind CV approach, prioritizing training and skills in the selection and recruitment of staff, as well as offering and facilitating work-life balance for women through flexible working hours without harming their professional careers, in short, developing and promoting a package of structural measures to correct the negative externalities that lead to the loss of talent. The public administration supports all of this through economic, fiscal and regulatory measures.

We also encourage further research to conduct similar studies using this questionnaire to compare and validate findings. For future research, we recommend that evaluations focus on different groups in various tourist destinations, including emerging and consolidated ones. New research will allow for validation of the instrument used and confirmation of whether or not leaks in the pipeline are present in all tourist destinations.

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