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No sustainability for tourism without gender equality

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the interconnections between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and tourism from a gender perspective. It is the first paper to take a critical analysis of how SDG 5 relates to tourism, and how tourism and gender equality interconnects with the other SDGs. First, we analyse the recent gender sensitive sustainable development agenda in order to set out the challenges – both past and present – that any sector involved in sustainable development faces. We then explore the links between the SDGs and tourism development from a gender perspective. In the third part of the paper, based on the field experiences of the authors, we use the examples of SDG 6 (“clean water and sanitation”) and SDG 8 (“sustainable economic growth and decent work”) to highlight the interconnections between gender equality and the other SDGs. Finally, we suggest some tools to help tourism businesses improve their performance with respect to gender equality thereby enhancing their capacity to contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs. We argue that, without tackling gender equality in a meaningful and substantive way, tourism’s potential to contribute to the SDGs will be reduced and sustainable tourism will remain an elusive “pot of gold”.

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Introduction

Gender and tourism studies have grown considerably over the past 20 years (Burrell, Manfredi, Rollin, Price, & Stead, 1997; Ferguson, 2009; Gibson, 2001; Harvey, Hunt, & Harris, 1995; Kinnaird & Hall, 1994, 1996; Lakovidou & Turner, 1995; Norris, Wall, Cooper, & Lockwood, 1994; Nozawa, 1995; Pritchard, Morgan, Ateljevic, & Harris, 2007; Scheyvens, 2007; Sinclair, 1997; Swain, 1993, 1995, 2007; Swain & Hall, 2007; Wilkinson & Pratiwi, 1995). Gender and tourism studies have opened doors for better understanding the opportunities, and the challenges, confronting tourism stakeholders in terms of poverty reduction (Tucker & Boonabaana, 2012); policy-making and projects (Ferguson, 2010a, 2010b, 2011; Ferguson & Moreno, 2015), and decent working conditions (Carvalho, Costa, Lykke, & Torres, 2014; Gentry, 2007; Huete, Brotons, & Sigüenza, 2016; Iverson, 2000; Jordan, 1997; Ladkin, 2011; Moreno & Cañada, 2018; Muñoz-Bullón, 2009; Purcell, 1996; Skalpe, 2007; Thrane, 2008; Vandegrift, 2008).

As widely recognised in the literature, without gender equality there can be no sustainability (Bidegain Ponte, 2017; Bidegain Ponte & Enríquez, 2016; UN Women, 2018b). The number of academic journal articles exploring gender, tourism and empowerment has grown in recent years (Feng, 2013; Figueroa-Domecq, Pritchard, Segovia-Pérez, Morgan, & Villacé-Molinero, 2015; Knight

& Cottrell, 2016; Moswete & Lacey, 2015; Movono & Dahles, 2017; Panta & Thapa, 2018; Ramos & Prideaux, 2014; Tran & Walter, 2014; Tucker & Boonabaana, 2012). Nonetheless, the implications of these research findings have not been sufficiently understood and translated into policy and practice at all levels of the tourism industry. A great deal of gender and tourism analysis is emerging in tourism (Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2015; Suárez, Barquín, Jiménez, & Alfonso, 2016), but this is not the case in the field where there is a dearth of gender sensitive policies. Thus it is vital to champion gender equality in the context of tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The global context of sustainability, reflected in the SDGs, makes it imperative to integrate gender equality within the SDGs and tourism development (UNWTO, 2017, 2018). From an academic point of view, little attention has been paid to clarifying the significance of the SDGs for “gender responsible tourism”, or consideration given to the broader context of the sustainable development of tourism from a gender perspective. Few academics have considered the broader policy environment or made links to structural barriers (Swain & Swain, 2004), or to intersectionality. The most significant structural barriers to gender equality are: eliminating all forms of violence against women and addressing unpaid care and domestic work (UN Women, 2018b). Intersectionality refers to women’s multiple, mutually constructed systems of subordination and thus how multiple demographic factors such as race, ethnicity, age, education and ability mediate experiences of equality and empowerment (Cole, 2017; Mooney, 2018). Thus women are not understood as a homogenous group, and context specific intersectional approaches allow for critical unpacking of social relations, justice and power. The “leave no-one behind” pledge within the SDGs attempts to focus attention on those who have been historically marginalised and hence is committing to an intersectional approach.

The United Nations’ declaration of 2017 as the Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development (IY2017) reflected tourism’s importance as a sector capable of contributing to sustainable development, including human rights. However, while the importance of gender equality has been widely recognised as integral to sustainability, relatively few tourism structures have embraced gender equality and women’s empowerment (Equality in Tourism, 2017; Ferguson, 2018; Ferguson & Moreno, 2015). This is problematic when tourism projects and policy are developed in the field (Ferguson & Moreno, 2015; Moreno, 2018b). Frequently, actions undertaken to improve the conditions of women working in tourism are not to be based on sound gender analysis, which is a prerequisite for meaningfully improving women’s positions. For example, in Spain, many hotels’ CSR policies include the creation of women’s executive networks, but make no reference to the discrimination faced by women workers on a daily basis (Ferguson & Moreno, 2016).

The main objective of this paper is to highlight the importance of SDG 5, gender equality, for the development of tourism and its relationship to the other SDGs. By first examining the place of gender equality in the SDGs and the interconnection between SDG5 and the other SDGs, the paper then explores these interconnections in relation to sustainable tourism. In doing so this paper highlights that SDG 5 is a critical component of sustainable tourism and offers some first steps businesses can take to support SDG 5.

It is our contention that a feminist perspective is required in tourism development (Aitchison, 2005; Swain, 2007) in order to ensure tourism’s sustainability. According to Moreno (2018a, p. 25) “Gender equality without feminism is confined to reproducing and making invisible the gaps between men and women. This also draws, for example, on the fact that having more or only women in a specific initiative does not guarantee gender equality if the symbolic and normative codes promoted by patriarchy are not analysed as the main challenges for reducing poverty in developed and developing countries”. This may be one of the reasons, as Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2015) have argued, there is a little dialogue between some gender and tourism researchers and “those in the wider social sciences” and the lack of “transformative feminist politics in international development institutions” (Ferguson, 2015, p. 380).

Drawing on the literature in gender mainstreaming that points out the importance of gender equality being a core component not an add-on (Caglar, Prügl, & Zwingel, 2013; Daly, 2005; Hoard, 2015; Mukhopadhyay, 2014; Standing, 2004) this paper argues that sustainable tourism is not possible if gender remains an “additional” element for sustainable tourism development, or if the veneer of gender is used as a way of silencing feminism. The “time’s up now” for gender equality in tourism because tourism has sought to champion sustainable development from economic, social and environment standpoints, but gender equality frequently remains completely absent when sustainability is pursued by tourism stakeholders (Hardy, Beeton, & Pearson, 2002; Ruhanen, Weiler, Moyle, & McLennan, 2015).

The methodology of this paper is based on the experiences of participatory, first-hand practical and theoretical research, grounded in fieldwork. It draws upon the authors’ extensive experience as academics, as well as gender and tourism consultants, who have worked in diverse countries and contexts over the past decade in international development. The focus on SDG 6 and 8 is based on our most recent and in depth fieldwork (for more details of the fieldwork see Moreno, 2017a and Cole, 2017).

The article will contribute to the growing body of literature on the role of tourism to contribute to the SDGs aiming to improve the lives of both women and men, while encouraging the sustainable development of tourism as a whole. It offers tools to tourism businesses to support their responsibilities to achieve the SDGs and will also provide inputs for policy-makers who are willing to transform tourism by integrating a gender perspective. First, we begin by analysing the recent gender sensitive sustainable development agenda in order to set out the challenges facing all sectors involved in sustainable development. Second, we explore the links between the SDGs and tourism development from a gender perspective. The third part of the paper explores gender and tourism using the context of SDG 6 (“clean water and sanitation”) and SDG 8 (“sustainable economic growth and decent work”) as two examples, to expose how gender equality plays a pivotal role in achieving all the SDGs. We then suggest some tools tourism businesses can use to support their responsibilities for achieving the SDGs.

The sustainable development agenda underpinned by a feminist lens

In 2000, the United Nations General Assembly, representing 191 governments, adopted the Millennium Declaration. With its eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 18 targets and 48 indicators, the Declaration affirmed global aims to be reached by 2015. The Millennium Declaration outlined mechanisms to guarantee women’s and men’s equal access to rights and opportunities, as well as to end violence against women through the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (United Nations, 2000).

The understanding of gender equality as a human right was affirmed in the framework of MDGs 5, “improve maternal health”, and target 3.A “eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education ...”. The MDGs therefore, were gender-guided in terms of the promotion of maternal health and girls’ education. Understood from a feminist perspective, however, the MDGs established distractions from their own aims due to a lack of feminist analysis (Antrobus, 2006; Ariffin, 2004; Kabeer, 2015; Mujeres en Red, 2005). According to De la Cruz (2015), the definition and application of the MDGs generated an important debate at the core of the women’s movement. For some, the MDGs were a reduction of the recommendations agreed upon during the 1990s through the Beijing Platform for Action. For others, the MDGs represented an opportunity for promoting action plans and mobilizing resources in line with the feminist agenda, as envisaged at the United Nations Conferences in Cairo in 1994, in Copenhagen in 1995, and during the follow-up meetings of the original Beijing Conference in 1995, known as Beijing +5 and Beijing +10.

The weakness of the MDGs lies in the lack of theoretical and practical connections between poverty, gender equality and women's lives. Whereas the Beijing Platform for Action was "based on a strong body of evidence that spelt out the complex and interdependent causalities underlying women's subordinate status across the world there was no such clear analytical logic to the MDGs" (Kabeer, 2015, p. 389). For example, the MDGs entailed a perception of maternal health or death devoid of causal elements, which suggested that the starting point for achieving improved maternal health, was at the point of pregnancy. The MDGs did not take into consideration important contextual, sexual and reproductive rights (Fernández-Layos & Ruiz, 2011). Another critique was directed at some of the indicators applied in assessing women's access to employment. For example, indicator 3.2 refers to the "share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector", such as, for example, the service sector. However, as pointed out by UNIFEM (2000), access to income and salaries linked to the service industry does not necessarily imply emancipation because this sector is strongly linked with other forms of subordination.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly, encompasses 17 SDGs and their 169 corresponding targets. These aim "to build on the MDGs and complete what they did not achieve. They seek to realise the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental" (United Nations, 2015b, p. 2). As stated, "the achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities" (Ibid., p. 6).

In order to more successfully identify women's differing needs, the SDGs are grounded upon a process of contextualization and conceptualization with respect to the links between poverty and gender equality (Chant, 2008). According to the Post-2015 Women's Coalition (2015), this process was vital to ensure that sustainable development truly means human development, environmental protection and social development. As a result, and given Agenda 2030's universal approach, it is no longer a North–South aid agenda. Rather, the SDGs offer significant possibilities for a more transformative and broader change agenda (Fukuda-Parr, 2016). The following measures are outlined by the United Nations aimed at integrating gender equality and women's empowerment into the SDGs:

- The improvement of women's capacities and their enjoyment of all human rights.
- The assessment, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work performed by women and girls.
- The full and equal participation of women in sustainable development as agents and decision-makers in the processes that affect their lives and the futures of their families, communities, countries and the world.
- The experience and leadership of those who defend women's rights and gender equality in parliaments, unions, cooperatives and community associations.
- The elimination of discriminatory laws, policies and practices and the promotion of legislation, policies and measures aimed at enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment (UN Women, 2018b; United Nations, 2015a, 2015b).

The potential of the SDGs to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment is enhanced by the recognition of the need to address violence against women and girls and to recognise their sexual and reproductive rights (Esquivel & Sweetman, 2016). According to Razavi (2016), although SDG 5 on "gender equality" failed to include any reference to "women's rights" or "women's human rights" in its title, it must be considered a step forward because most of the key strategic elements demanded by women's rights organizations were included. However, De la Cruz (2015) stresses that the SDGs indicators and targets still fail to adequately reflect women's priorities in relation to social norms, domestic decision-making, taxation and access to

Table 1. The Sustainable Development Goals and tourism from a gender perspective.

SDGs	Gender perspective inputs
SDG 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere	There is a complex link between poverty, and gender equality, which is not based on job creation and income alone. The link between poverty alleviation, tourism and gender equality requires a broad analysis from a gender perspective including exploring the feminization of poverty in tourism i.e. tourism income does not necessarily free women from gender based violence or give them equal power.
SDG 2 – End hunger, achieve food security and nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture	The importance of food sovereignty and safety is complicated when communities are involved with tourism. Women are frequently responsible for food production and maintaining a supply of food for their family while hosting tourists can be a challenge. Producing food for tourists' tastes can compete for land with primary production for local people. Furthermore, women frequently do not have land certificates but are the first to lose out to usufruct rights to tourism developers.
SDG 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	Limited reproductive and sexual rights are exacerbated by sex tourism. Increases in sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, rape and sexual exploitation of women, girls and boys, all need to be recognised and addressed. Increased health spending for the benefit of local populations, including gender-based violence, safe sex education and provision, and reduced stigmatization of HIV, could be promoted through tourism.
SDG 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all	Developing a tourism curriculum from a gender perspective is a challenge, and rarely exists, even though more women than men study and teach tourism! Tourist education has lacked an exploration of the roles, experiences and contributions of women within tourism, or a consideration of the barriers that prevent women from reaching their potential (Pritchard, 2018). Cultural factors, reproductive labour roles and basic education deficits frequently limit opportunities for community tourism education for women.
SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	Including a gender perspective in tourism is a clear and concrete action not only to reduce poverty, but also to invest smartly in that reduction. Tourism models, including those that are promoted as less harmful, will not be sufficiently sustainable and accountable if a gender-based approach and the empowerment of women are not incorporated in a real and sustained way. This implies adjusting all declarations, instruments of planning, management and analysis related to tourism.
SDG 6 – Ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	Women bear the brunt of water scarcity when communities lose out to the tourism industry for water supplies. A human rights approach to water management would ensure a fairer distribution of water. Women's voices in the access, use, control and administration of water is critical.
SDG 7 – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	The tourism industry needs a lot of power. To be sustainable, it must prioritise the use of renewable sources of energy. Besides promoting its own self-interest and sustainability, it can also promote the use of reliable green sources of energy in the communities where it is based. Increased access to electricity will also promote women's education and security, as well as the creation of new jobs.
SDG 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all	A gender perspective in tourism employment policies places emphasis on salary gaps, sexual abuse and harassment by colleagues and tourists, and fosters female workers' participation and decision-making.
SDG 9 – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation	Awareness of the infrastructure used by women is essential to ensure their safety; without due consideration, tourism development can limit this. Since innovation implies transformation, tourism should embrace the transformational opportunities promoted by gender equality.
SDG 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries	Better regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and better representation of developing countries in international decision-making will reduce inequality. Therefore, it would be

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

SDGs	Gender perspective inputs
	very useful to know the gender impact of foreign direct investment in the tourist sector and the fiscal benefits that tourism enjoys in many developing countries.
SDG 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	The guaranteed safety of women, both locals and tourists is required if tourism is to be sustainable. Over-tourism is a significant issue for many cities, as yet there has been no gender analysis of the problems experienced by citizens as a result of this problem.
SDG 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	Ensuring sustainable production requires the integration of a gender analysis in the value chain to consolidate fair trade and ensure women's participation.
SDG 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	Climate change will have a greater impact on women than men (Denton, 2002). According to UN Women (2018a, 2018b) women and children are 14 times more likely to die in a disaster than men. Women's voice is essential in climate change resilience and tourism related planning, policymaking and implementation.
SDG 14 – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	Forty-seven percent of the 120 million people who work in the capture and post-harvest fisheries sectors are women (FAO, 2015) so their voice in the sustainable use of the oceans must move beyond them as products for tourism.
SDG 15 – Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and halt biodiversity loss	Loss of land through tourism is well documented. Land certification for women is critical and must not be compromised by tourism development. Women's role as custodians of biodiversity needs to be nurtured and given greater recognition.
SDG 16 – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all and build inclusive institutions	In order to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, it is vital to understand that structural inequalities are mainly produced by patriarchy, which perpetuates gender-based violence in the form of physical, economic, psychological, sexual and political abuse. Therefore, the identification and implementation of measures to end gender-based violence, embedded in or related to tourism, must be a priority for achieving SDG 16.
SDG 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development	According to UNWTO (2013), more than half of the poorest countries in the world use tourism as an instrument for poverty reduction. The UNWTO needs to recognise the critical contribution that Civil Society Organisations, particularly women's groups, will make to their policy and agenda. The inclusion of women's voices will give more value to multi-stakeholder partnerships and public-private sector initiatives.

services, nor do they analyse women's poverty with respect to access to income, time and property titles. Thus, whereas the SDGs are definitely an improvement on the MDGs from a feminist perspective, a number of weaknesses still remain to be addressed.

The SDGs and tourism from a gender perspective

In 2015, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) sought to mainstream tourism within all 17 SDGs (UNWTO, 2015, 2017). This was done through the framework of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development (IY2017), however, gender equality was not a key element. As pointed out by the non-governmental organization [Equality in Tourism \(2017\)](#) in response to UNWTO's Discussion Paper on the occasion of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017,¹ the UNWTO failed to grasp the importance of SDG 5 for achieving all of the other SDGs. This is particularly surprising in light of the growing recognition of the importance of gender equality across UN policy and civil society discourse. The UNWTO discussion paper dealt with narrow aspects of gender equality issues in tourism. For instance, while it addressed employment and decent work, it left out discussions of political empowerment and broader questions of structural inequalities. As such, it did not make clear how tourism is meant to contribute to achieving SDG 5, nor did it shed light on the role of

institutions in working towards gender equality in tourism. Furthermore, it mixed “women” and “youth” in an unhelpful conflation, thus diluting the importance of gender issues to both the SDGs and the tourism sector. Moreover, achieving gender equality is not possible without dedicating specific resources to addressing the gender dimensions of tourism; specific budgets are required to advance tourism’s contribution to SDG 5. As pointed out by Ferguson (2018, p. 20) “While gender issues were mentioned in a number of speeches and core documents, in reality there has been no substantive support from the secretary-general or programme directors for gender equality to be a priority issue for UNWTO”. Furthermore, the SDGs, “leave no-one behind agenda” underscores the importance of intersectionality, which the UNWTO have failed to adequately consider.

A gender analysis of how tourism relates to all the SDGs means more than merely including the word gender equality or women’s empowerment in every SDG. First, it involves recognizing that gender equality is a human right. As Bakas, Costa, Durão, Carvalho, and Breda (2018) suggest, many of the issues that women face in tourism are not a matter of increased equality, rather they are human rights issues. The outdated “add women and mix” strategy frequently applied to tourism, must be replaced with an analysis of women and gender-based power relations when designing, proposing, creating and implementing new tourism policies and initiatives (Moser, 1993; Rathgeber, 1990; Razavi & Miller, 1995). In other words, gender mainstreaming is a critical concern for implementing tourism development from a gender perspective (Lee-Gosselin, Briere, & Ann, 2013; Lombardo & Mergaert, 2013; Walby, 2005) in tourism. Table 1, based on Moreno (2017b), provides an outline of some valuable avenues to consider when conducting a gender analysis of the SDGs as they relate to tourism. The following section then explores SDGs 6 and 8 in greater detail.

Gender and tourism in SDG 6 and SDG 8 and pushing forward

We now use the examples of SDG 6, “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”, and SDG 8, “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all”, to explore in greater depth the considerations and analysis required for tourism to become a real engine for gender equality and women’s empowerment. These two examples are chosen based on the authors’ recent in depth research. Gender inequality in employment is one of the major factors preventing decent work in tourism, as the first author discovered while working for UN Women in Cape Verde on their Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming in tourism; and in Albania where she reviewed the tourism strategy from a gender perspective. Water is the most important natural resource for the future of tourism, and a global tourism concern (Gössling & Peeters, 2015), although its importance sometimes remains invisible. As the second author discovered in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia, water supply can be a limiting factor for women’s participation in tourism.

SDG 6 – ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

There is a close relationship between water justice and gender (Ahlers & Zwarteveen, 2009; O’Reilly, Halvorson, Sultana, & Laurie, 2009; Sultana, 2011; Truelove, 2011) and this has been explored specifically in relation to tourism in a number of destinations (Cole, 2017; Cole & Ferguson, 2015; Cole & Tulis, 2016). The tourism industry exerts an enormous strain on water supplies. This generates a range of social problems, not least because local inhabitants often have to compete with the tourism sector over the access, allocation and use of water for their personal and domestic needs. Globally, women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80% of households (UN Women, 2018a). Women suffer to a greater extent when water resources are mismanaged (Hemmingway, 2004). As caregivers, food providers, and health care suppliers,

women in many countries are responsible for domestic water provision and management. Their roles are often “naturalised”, unpaid, and unrecognised, which means that women live with issues of water scarcity and contamination on a daily basis. Women’s experiences were not monolithic. Nationality, ethnicity, life-stage and occupation all intersected and compounded their experiences of capitalism, patriarchy and water injustice (Cole, 2017).

Women’s water work is part of reproductive labour, lacks visibility, and is integral to water supply. Despite this, women are frequently excluded from water distribution policy and decision-making (Cole, 2017) and decisions on “big water issues” such as allocation have been gender blind (UN Women, 2018a). The exclusion of women’s voices in the public domain reinforces unequal power dynamics in the household and community. Struggles over water in tourism destinations contribute to gendered processes of empowerment and disempowerment (Cole & Ferguson, 2015) and women’s disproportionate responsibility for water impacts on their ability to work (Cole, 2017). Where tourism receives priority over communities, conflict and resentment will grow, and the potential for tourism to contribute to sustainable development will be undermined. Tourism could have a real impact on SDG 6 by promoting a gender-sensitive water agenda. Infrastructure improvements including the supply of improved water and sanitation is a well-documented positive impact of tourism (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). However, this is clearly not always the case, with far reaching consequences for women in many destinations. For tourism to contribute to both SDG 5 and SDG 6 it requires firstly the recognition of unpaid and domestic work so the opportunity costs of women’s water work can be accounted for. Secondly, affirmative action in water governance is needed to address the gender imbalances that drive inequitable water allocation and distribution. This requires strengthening women’s voice in the access to and control over water supplies, its administration, pricing and use, and thus their participation in water management and decision-making. However, this increased participation needs to be achieved without increasing women’s workloads. Research highlights how leadership in destination management can be improved when a human rights based approach is taken (Cole, 2014).

We know that increased tourism will add to climate change (Lenzen et al., 2018) and that it is those who are most vulnerable, will be the worst off. This is particularly the case in relation to water scarcity. Women face greater health and safety risks when water and sanitation systems are compromised by climate-induced drought (UN Women, 2017). As Cole’s (2017) research has highlighted it is women that take on increased domestic and care work to compensate, walking further for collection, eking out meagre supplies and worrying about provision for their families.

The interlinkage of SDG 6 with all the other SDGs is, of course, one of the most apparent – after all, water is life. For example, without it we cannot grow food, affecting our food security (SDG 2). When we have to pay for it, it affects our poverty levels (SDG 1) and our health (SDG 3). When there are no piped supplies, we have to collect it – usually girls – affecting opportunities for education (SDG 4). As electricity is required to pump water, SDG 7 is affected through the water-energy nexus. Waiting for water to flow down pipes impacts women’s opportunities for employment (SDG 8). As discussed by Cole (2017), gender is implicated in all these impacts. A critical gender analysis of water and tourism has the potential to not only impact SDGs 5 and 6 but may have ramifications across a host of other SDGs.

SDG 8 – promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all

For tourism stakeholders, the major promise is the creation of employment. In fact, this discourse is at the heart of the trend to promote tourism as a tool for poverty reduction, especially for women (UNWTO & UN Women, 2011). Globally, some 55% of tourism workers are women. In some countries, such as Peru or Lithuania, this percentage is over 70% (Baum, 2013). Women

tend to be concentrated in the kinds of occupations that are seen to benefit “feminine characteristics” (Bolles, 1997). As Sinclair (1997) argues, when tourism is not gender aware, tourism converts women’s characteristics – that is, “feminine characteristics” imposed by patriarchy – into merchandise. The “feminisation” of such types of work has also been associated with strong gender discrimination that is expressed in lower wages and a lack of professional recognition (Guimarães & Silva, 2016). As such, women workers’ capacity to influence the trade union agenda is severely limited (Cañada, 2016). Within this context, any analysis that integrates the dimension of “intersectionality” is very important since the construction of their identities as a group of workers entails complex interactions between their gender, class, race and ethnicity (Adib & Guerrier, 2003; De los Reyes, 2017; McBride, Hebson, & Holgate, 2015). As Dyer, McDowell, and Batnitzky (2010) discuss, gender and other identities are also implicit in relation to manager and customer requirements who expect “particular gendered performances” (2010, p. 641).

At present, tourism largely fails to provide decent work for many women especially those at the lowest levels of the occupational pyramid. For example, according to Cañada (2016), working conditions in hotels’ housekeeping departments in Spain, with a high range of migrant women, have given rise to higher rates of accidents and serious injuries than any other jobs in the service industry. This is the case even though they only constitute 30% of staff. The situation, moreover, has deteriorated because of outsourcing which has led to the loss of professional categories recognised in workers’ contracts, leading to a decline in working conditions, status and pay. Thus “hotel maid” is reduced to categories such as “cleaner” or “labourer” (Cañada, 2018).

This situation also promotes what Burrell et al. (1997) call “parking area” training. That is, few opportunities for career progression because of a lack of incentives to invest in more and improved training. However, at the launch of the Spanish version of the Global Report of Women in Tourism in 2012 at Madrid’s International Tourism Fair (FITUR), the participants (mainly Spanish women) did not agree with the claim that women in tourism were less well trained than men. On the contrary, several women participants suggested that the main obstacle to decent work for women in tourism is not a lack of training, but a lack of opportunities offered to women and the low social value of a trained woman in the labour market (UNWTO, 2012). Thus, for example, in Portugal, although women work more hours and are better trained than men, they earn less than their male colleagues in the accommodation, travel agencies and tour operation sectors (Carvalho et al., 2014).

Tourism has a great responsibility to ensure gender sensitive decent work. The prevailing discourse on employment in tourism is that the sector supports 1 in 10 jobs globally, many of these jobs are based on gender occupational segregation. In other words, most women’s jobs are concentrated at the lower end of the ladder and women remain grossly under-represented at the management level and board level (Equality in Tourism, 2018). Therefore, employing women or supporting them to become entrepreneurs does not necessarily change the gendered dynamics in which they are embedded, nor does it necessarily impact their relationships with managers, customers or between co-workers.

Gender sensitive decent work in tourism also means reconciliation between work and family life. This is just as important for men as it is for women workers, enabling men to become equal stakeholders in their families and in care work. When men take their children to school, or finish work early to pick them up as often as women do, then greater flexibility will be offered to all workers and care work will be better shared (Cole, 2018). As Bakas et al. (2018) suggest, when men have care duties, the invisibility of childcare comes to light. Women face challenges when seeking to reach the highest positions in tourism companies not because “women are doing something wrong” or because of a problem inherent to women. The fact is that most women workers in tourism are located within the lowest rungs of companies’ occupational pyramids. Therefore, according to Moreno and Cañada (2018), the feminisation in tourism employment in most cases indicates precariousness and women’s lack of power. The disempowerment of

women working in tourism weakens women's ability to maximise their potential contribution to the sector, thereby undermining the sustainability of the tourism industry.

Pushing forward

The private sector was actively involved in shaping the SDGs (Le Blanc, 2015). As Milne and Gray (2013) suggest, there is an emerging consensus that transnational corporations can, and ought to, contribute to sustainable development by enhancing positive impacts – such as on livelihoods, health and education – and reducing negative impacts – for instance, those related to resource consumption, pollution and human rights violations. However, corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices hardly ever address system-wide sustainability challenges, such as overcoming patriarchy. This is particularly the case in large-scale mass tourism which, as Scheyvens, Banks, and Hughes (2016) suggest, “is dominated by businesses that have built their business models around being short-term operators with high levels of flexibility” (p. 378). While good for profit, this means that these businesses are not invested in destinations and have no interest in their sustainability, in overcoming current inequities, or in advancing gender equality.

In order for businesses to take on responsibility and support the SDGs, either voluntarily or by government regulation, they will require tools to implement, manage and measure their progress. Human rights are the foundation for the SDGs and since the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (United Nations, 2011) some elements of the tourism industry have begun interpreting them (Sandang, 2015). For example, the International Tourism Partnership (2014) has suggested that the key areas of concern for hotel businesses are workers' rights, supply chain related issues, community rights, human trafficking risks, customers' rights and governance related issues. The same organization has highlighted global water concerns and argued that hotels should take action (International Tourism Partnership, 2018). As discussed previously in this journal, Human Rights Impact Assessments (HRIAs) are an essential starting point for companies to conduct the necessary due diligence (Cole, 2014). Human Rights Impact Assessments have not yet been standardised to the same degree as environmental impact assessments but a helpful guide for tourism businesses and destinations on how to conduct an HRIA has been produced (Twentyfifty, 2017). Taking human rights based approach is more than a requirement to do no harm: it requires an active commitment to implement key tenets of the UN Guiding Principles, and therefore the SDGs. There are a few limited examples that already exist in tourism, for example lodges that provide water (Smith, 2018), and gender awareness training (*Equality in Tourism*, 2015), in the surrounding communities. However, it is unlikely that most companies will comply with the necessary due diligence requirements without governments' active engagement and enforcement.

Human Rights Impact Assessments are an essential tool for businesses to conduct due diligence to comply with the UN Guiding Principles and understand their impact on their stakeholders. However, they are not specifically gender focused. Gender focused tools exist but they are not adapted for tourism. For example, UN Women and UN Global Compact developed the Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs) as a tool for businesses to empower women across the workplace, marketplace and the community. While they aim to help companies around the world to assess their gender equality performance, they will need to be refined to be useful for many tourism businesses.

Other tools, such as participatory gender audits, can help to identify organizational strengths and challenges in terms of mainstreaming gender. Conducting gender audits would help companies and destinations spotlight gender (in)equality and identify systems, policy, processes and organizational culture that require change. Audits are used for certification, which, although not without critics in tourism (Font & Harris, 2004), are considered effective instruments to improve companies' sustainability performance (Ayuso, 2007). Unfortunately, major tourism specific audit

and certification schemes, such as Travelife, are yet to include gender equality measures. However, tourism companies that have opted for broader certification schemes, such as B Corp, have shown that it has improved their gender equality (Intrepid Travel, 2018).

Businesses need to ensure that they are vigilant about complying with SDG target 5.2, “eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation”, through their company policies and procedures. Immense numbers of tourism workers have experienced sexual harassment, so much so that Pritchard (2018) calls it the topic of the next decade.

Conclusion

The SDGs offer a potentially radical improvement and departure from the MDGs. This is because the SDGs are based on the identification and analysis of the main challenges to gender equality – challenges that the MDGs did not cover. The SDGs include consideration of strategic elements considered essential by women’s organisations. Although there has been some debate about the appropriateness of making “gender equality” a standalone goal, this is explained by the need to secure political will and resource mobilization. Yet, this does not mean that gender equality is not integral to all the other SDGs. The importance of SDG 5 for achieving all of the other SDGs is consistently highlighted by UN policy discourse and civil society. However, the UNWTO and other tourism organisations have yet to acknowledge the need for gender to be mainstreamed. Without tackling gender equality in a meaningful and substantive way, tourism’s potential to contribute to all 17 SDGs will be substantively reduced.

Although the SDGs “talk the talk” on gender equality, when we critically analyse the interconnection between the SDG 5 and other SDGs in the tourism context we shine a light on the gap between rhetoric and reality. Tourism can support the provision of piped water to remote communities, supporting SDG 6, but tourism induced water mismanagement and scarcity affects women in many destinations on a daily basis. Tourism can create jobs and support SDG 8 but, as we have uncovered, the nature of tourism jobs frequently does not support SDG 5 or gender mainstreaming. Providing jobs for women alone does not change patriarchal structures, nor does it redistribute unpaid care work, reduce the gender pay gap or combat sexual harassment. The same patriarchal structures, frequently reinforced by tourism policy, dictate water work as women’s work, which is unpaid and unaccounted for, and prevents some women from taking jobs.

A human rights approach is embedded in the SDGs and our work starts to explore how to make this a reality for women in tourism. We have suggested the use of Human Rights Impact Assessments, Women’s Empowerment Principles and Gender Audits by business as initial steps business can take to play their part towards achieving the SDGs. There is no doubt that all this requires critical thinking, political will, a re-evaluation of priorities, and a dedicated budget. There are gaps, both in the theory and practice, of implementing gender equal and, therefore, sustainable tourism. Some of the areas that require far more detailed analysis include the sexual harassment that women, in particular, face and how to squash it; the intersectional issues women face and how to confront them; and the additional burdens tourism places on women.

There is substantial work needed to further our understanding of how tourism intersects with gender equality and the other SDGs. This will require (1) the collection and analysis of gender sensitive tourism data, (2) training and tourism studies’ curricula that integrate gender within sustainable development, (3) tourism practice that draws on feminist gender analysis, (4) more use of intersectional approaches to understand tourism relationship with the SDGs, and (5) an evaluation of methods utilised to improve gender equality and the dissemination of best practice. Much remains to be done, but the benefits, both for the tourism sector and for the global community that stands to benefit far exceed the costs involved.

Note

1. Available here: http://www.tourism4development2017.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/070417_iy2017-discussion-paper.pdf

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