



Women Entrepreneurship in Tourism Industry; General Outlook of Turkey

Turizm Endüstrisinde Kadın Girişimciliği; Türkiye'nin Genel Görünümü

Ozlem Ozdemir ^{ORCID}

Regent's University London, United Kingdom, ORCID: 0009-0000-4423-3760

Abstract / Öz

Tourism continues to grow and has been perceived as a fertile sector for entrepreneurial initiatives. The importance of women in business life as an entrepreneur has become a significant phenomenon in recent decades. Over the past decade, although women entrepreneurs have gained more education and experience, and more women are entering male-dominated occupations, the integration of women into positions of authority within business organisations has achieved only limited success. The predominance of small firms and relatively low entry barriers have led to tourism entrepreneurs being premised on their potential to empower women and provide opportunities specifically for women entrepreneurs (Figuerola-Domecq et al., 2020). According to United Nations (UNWTO) Global Report on Women in Tourism (Ferguson et al., 2019), the majority of the tourism workforce worldwide is female; 54 per cent of people employed in tourism are women compared to 39 per cent in the broader economy. A high proportion of women are employed in the tourism area. However, their function in the sector is dominated by unskilled, low-paid jobs. In this study, women entrepreneurs' position in Turkey has been examined briefly to show their existence by considering their obstacles and challenges.

Turizm büyümeye devam ediyor ve girişimciler için de verimli bir sektör olarak algılanıyor. Kadınların bir girişimci olarak iş hayatındaki önemi son yıllarda önemli bir olgu haline gelmiştir. Son on yılda, kadın girişimcilerin daha fazla eğitim ve deneyim kazanması ve daha fazla kadının erkek egemen mesleklerde yer almasına rağmen, kadınların ticari kuruluşlarda yetkili pozisyonlara entegrasyonu sınırlı bir başarı yaratmıştır. Küçük firmaların sektördeki baskınlığı ve sektöre girişte yaşanan göreceli düşük engeller, girişimci kadınları kendileri için fırsatlar sağlama potansiyellerini ortaya çıkarmasına yönlendirmiştir (Figuerola-Domecq et al., 2020). Birleşmiş Milletler (UNWTO) Turizmde Kadın Raporu'na göre, dünya çapındaki turizm işgücünün çoğunluğu kadındır; turizmde istihdam edilenlerin yüzde 54'ü kadınsa, ekonominin genelinde bu oran yüzde 39'dur. Turizm alanında yüksek oranda kadın istihdam edilmesine rağmen kadınlar ağırlıklı olarak vasıfsız, düşük ücretli işlerde istihdam edilmektedirler. Bu çalışmada, kadın girişimcilerin Türkiye'deki konumu, engelleri ve zorlukları ve varlıkları dikkate alınarak kısaca incelenmiştir.

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Corresponding Author/ Sorumlu Yazar

O. Ozdemir:
ozdemiro@regents.ac.uk



1. Introduction

Tourism is accepted as one of the critical economic activities worldwide. It's incredible to see that despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Travel & Tourism sector has managed to bounce back and make a significant impact on the global economy. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC) annual report, the sector contributed 7.6% to the global GDP in 2022, which is a remarkable 22% increase from the previous year. In terms of employment, this sector has created 22 million new jobs, representing an impressive 7.9% increase. It's heartening to see that Travel & Tourism is on the road to recovery and has the potential to continue growing in the future. It's imperative to note that international tourism is finally beginning to recover after the COVID-19 pandemic. As per the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) report, arrivals have reached 57% of pre-pandemic levels in the first seven months of 2022. This is a positive indication that the Travel & Tourism sector is making a resounding comeback, which is crucial for the global economy.

Entrepreneurs need to possess specific characteristics, like the risk taker, innovative, creator of an enterprise etc., According to Solvoll et al. (2015), tourism entrepreneurship stands apart from other types of entrepreneurship in

that tourism entrepreneurs are driven more by the desire to achieve a better quality of life than by the desire to make profits. As this type of entrepreneurship is characterised by the desire to create a business that supports a particular lifestyle, such as travel, leisure or culture, tourism entrepreneurs need to be lifelong learners who are open to new ideas, knowledge, and experiences additional to other entrepreneurial characteristics. However, even though the entrepreneurship rate in tourism industry is higher than other industries and the percentage of women who work in the tourism industry is high, unfortunately, unskilled, low-paid jobs dominate women function in this industry.

This paper aims to bring attention to the often-overlooked issue of women entrepreneurship in the Turkish tourism industry. Despite the country's paternalistic culture, there has been a lack of research in this area. It is crucial to address the challenges and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs in this field, and this research will contribute to the growing literature on the topic. Gender diversity and inclusivity are crucial in the tourism sector, and it is imperative to explore this issue further in other cultures and regions around the world.

2. Entrepreneurship in Tourism

Entrepreneurship has been proven to be a vital contributor to socioeconomic growth and development. Not only does it provide countless job opportunities, but it also offers a diverse range of goods and services to consumers, thereby increasing national prosperity and competitiveness.

Entrepreneurship in the field of tourism is known as tourism entrepreneurship and it covers all activities that offers product and services related to tourism. The tourism industry is a vast and diverse landscape, encompassing an extensive range of services and opportunities to cater to the interests of every traveler. The industry comprises of various elements, including transportation, lodging, catering, travel agencies, tour operators, entertainment, art and handicraft production, marketing, sports tourism, zoos, botanical gardens, and more (Rusu et al., 2017). These services are essential to providing tourists with a memorable and enjoyable experience during their travels. It's vital that these industries continue to work together to create a safe and comfortable environment for travellers from all over the world.

In these contexts, it can be said that tourism industry is made up of a variety of organizations that work together to provide a range of services and experiences that cater to the needs and preferences of travellers. From accommodations and dining options to transportation and tour operators, each aspect of the industry is dedicated to delivering exceptional services and products that can meet the unique needs of every individual traveler. tourism industry is a mixture of organisations actively involved in the development, (Lordkipanidze et al., 2005). As a result, the people who set up any organisation to development, production and service regarding to meet tourist needs can be defined as tourism entrepreneur. Tourism entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in the growth of tourism-related industries, providing valuable opportunities for regional communities to thrive. Even though tourism entrepreneurship is accepted as a driving force for the economies, researchers assert that this topic is well-represented in practice but is poorly developed and respresented in theoretical aspects even though the existence of view range of topics and opportunities to examine (Fu et al., 2019; Carmichael and Morrison, 2011). As mentioned by Fu et al., (2019) tourism entrepreneurship is rich in practice but poor in theoretical development.

Data shows that tourism continues to grow and has been perceived as a productive sector for entrepreneurial initiatives. Based on a review of the historical thoughts on entrepreneurship, Koh and Hatten (2002) explained all definitions of entrepreneurship. They assert that tourism entrepreneurs need to possess specific characteristics of entrepreneurship like the risk taker, innovative, creator of an enterprise etc., and define tourism entrepreneurs as a creator of touristic enterprises motivated by monetary and/or non-monetary reasons to pursue a perceived market opportunity legally, marginally, or illegally. Like other entrepreneurial initiatives, the acquisition of skills and knowledge through experience is still important, however, there are other factors at play when it comes to entering entrepreneurial activity (Szivas, 2001). However, for a tourism entrepreneur, maintaining a sense of curiosity and continuously seeking out fresh knowledge and experiences is vital to achieving success.

The tourism as a global industry can have a significant impact on local and regional economies, providing new employment opportunities and generating tax revenues. Tourism enterprises can have a significant impact on the local economy by creating and supporting other industries and productive activities. From facilitation and transportation to attractions, accommodation, catering, and travel-related retail businesses, each aspect of the tourism industry can stimulate growth and development in the surrounding area. By providing exceptional services and products that cater to the needs and preferences of travellers. This contributes to regional development, reduces income

inequalities, and provides a source of income diversification for the community. Tourism can undoubtedly have a plethora of positive effects on the economy and community, provided it is executed correctly. It has the potential to generate employment opportunities, facilitate the growth of local businesses, and preserve cultural traditions. Additionally, tourists can gain an insight into and appreciate the local way of life, thereby fostering a sense of mutual understanding between diverse communities. However, it's crucial to ensure that tourism is conducted sustainably and with due respect towards the environment and locals. When approached properly, tourism can be an invaluable tool for bringing about positive change.. Nonetheless, the tourism industry still has the potential to provide significant economic benefits to local and regional communities, creating new employment opportunities and generating tax revenues. This can lead to improved regional development, reduced income inequalities, and greater income diversification for the community. Overall, the impact of tourism on the economy and the people who live in the region can be positive. Contrary to popular belief, the tourism industry suggests that expertise and experience are not necessarily the most important factors when entering the field. In fact, many individuals enter tourism without any technical skills or knowledge because it is relatively easy to get started (Szivas, 2001). However, this observation underestimates the skills and knowledge of tourism entrepreneurship, and this assumption can be the relevant research topic for future studies.

3. Women Entrepreneurship in Turkey

In recent years, the role of women in business has become increasingly important, particularly in the field of entrepreneurship. Even though more and more women are gaining education and experience, and breaking into traditionally male-dominated industries, there is still a long way to go when it comes to achieving gender parity in positions of authority within business organisations. Studies have shown that men and women tend to be perceived differently when it comes to leadership roles, with women often being seen as the primary caregiver and men as the primary breadwinner. However, with the right support and resources, there is no reason why women cannot be just as successful as men in the world of business. In short, entrepreneurship is a gendered action.

It is inspiring to witness the increasing presence of women entrepreneurs in the business realm, regardless of the country's level of development. It is imperative to empower and endorse female entrepreneurs, as they offer unique insights and expertise. By promoting gender equality in the world of business, we can foster a more diverse and inventive economy. It is unfortunate that the business world in many developing countries is still plagued by patriarchal beliefs and practices, which can greatly hinder the success of women entrepreneurs. These stereotypes and gendered constraints can be particularly prevalent in places like Turkey, making it all the more challenging for women to achieve their goals. Despite these obstacles, it is inspiring to see the determination of female entrepreneurs who are committed to effectuating positive change in their communities. While there is still progress to be made in terms of increasing female participation rates, it's heartening to see that consciousness is shifting and success stories of women entrepreneurs are being recognized. With continued support and resources, I believe that Turkish women can continue to break barriers and achieve great things in business and beyond. According to the recently published Global Gender Gap Report (2023) by the World Economic Forum, Turkey has made significant progress in closing the gender gap in estimated earned income as well as for professional and technical workers. This is certainly a positive development, but unfortunately, the gap has widened when it comes to wage equality and female representation in the parliament. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to see the strides that are being made towards gender equality in Turkey.

Even though the participation of women entrepreneurs has increased all around the world, and women are very active globally in a wide variety businesses and contexts, according to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Report (2021/22), no country has more active women than men. According to World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index (2023), no country has yet achieved full gender parity. It's worth noting that Europe has the highest gender parity among all regions, with a 76.3% rating across all subindexes. It's impressive to see that one-third of the countries in the region rank in the top 20, and 20 out of the 36 countries have at least 75% parity. Iceland, Norway, and Finland are particularly noteworthy for their gender parity achievements, both regionally and globally. However, it's concerning to see that Hungary, Czech Republic, and Cyprus rank at the bottom of the region. Eurasia and Central Asia holds a solid 4th place among the eight regions in terms of the overall Gender Gap Index, with a parity score of 69%. Nevertheless, it's worrisome that the parity score has remained stagnant since the 2020 edition, though there has been a modest improvement of 3.2 percentage points since 2006. Moldova, Belarus, and Armenia lead the region while Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, and Türkiye are at the bottom. The highest and lowest ranked countries differ by 14.9 percentage points in terms of parity. Unfortunately, at the current pace, it will take 167 years for the Eurasia and Central Asia region to achieve gender parity.

It's really disheartening to hear about the obstacles that women in Turkey have to face when trying to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams. It's important to create a level playing field for all aspiring business owners, regardless of gender, so that everyone has an equal shot at success. Entrepreneurship is a challenging journey that comes with a plethora of hurdles. Financial issues are just one of the many obstacles that businesses face. In addition to financial concerns, entrepreneurs often struggle with personnel issues, marketing difficulties, and a lack of engagement with business partners. This can make it challenging to secure lines of credit or hire outside services when you lack experience or connections. Unfortunately, these challenges are often compounded by societal norms, including patriarchal values and traditional gender roles. Limited access to education and training opportunities, as well as formal and informal networks, can also hinder business growth. Recognizing these barriers is crucial in overcoming them and building a thriving business. It's no wonder that women feel conflicted between their roles as entrepreneurs and their roles in family life. However, with continued support and resources, I believe that Turkish women can overcome these barriers and achieve their full potential in business and beyond. Scholars argue that women tend to set up a business to gain respect by supporting their families, achieving economic dependence or having independence due to increasing economic position. Even though the reason might be varied across cultures, the main reasons can be summarised as independence both for their life and economic position.

The predominance of small firms and relatively low entry barriers have led to tourism entrepreneurs being premised on their potential to empower women and provide opportunities specifically for women entrepreneurs (Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2020)

4. Women Entrepreneurship in Tourism

It's interesting to note that the tourism industry has a higher percentage of female workers compared to other industries. According to a report by UN Women in Tourism, 54% of people employed in tourism are women, while the broader economy only has 39% female workers. This shows that the tourism industry is an important avenue for women to enter the workforce and contribute to the economy. It's great to see that more and more women are taking on roles in tourism and making a positive impact in the industry. Women's entrepreneurship in the tourism industry is crucial to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals of promoting gender equality and economic growth. The UN World Tourism Organization recognizes this and encourages the support and advancement of women in the industry. By empowering women entrepreneurs in tourism, we can create a more equal and prosperous society for all (UNWTO). It is important to note that a significant number of women are employed in the tourism industry. This unequivocally proves that women possess the necessary skills and abilities to make valuable contributions to this field. However, as indicated by Cave and Kilic (2010), the percentage of women who work in the tourism industry is high, but unskilled, low-paid jobs dominate their function. The reasons of chosen women for mainly low skilled job has been examined by Pastore et al. (2021), and according to them, many service sector jobs, particularly in tourism, are strongly related to gender and tend to have low pay, low productivity, and seasonal working conditions. This can make it challenging for workers to earn a stable income and support themselves and their families throughout the year. It's important for employers and policymakers to work together to address these issues and create more equitable and sustainable employment opportunities in the tourism industry and beyond.

Turkey unquestionably possesses the potential to revolutionize its tourism industry. Its rapidly developing market demography enables it to emerge as a major player in the global tourism market and Turkish entrepreneurs plays a crucial role for branding Turkish Tourism Industry (Dincer et al., 2015). Turkey's rich historical heritage, with its wealth of knowledge and experience, has undoubtedly had a positive impact on the country's entrepreneurs. The deep roots of Turkey's history have provided a strong foundation for innovation and creativity in the business world, allowing entrepreneurs to draw upon a vast array of resources and inspiration. From the ancient Greeks and Romans to the Ottoman Empire and beyond, Turkey's historical legacy is a testament to the resilience and ingenuity of its people. By learning from the past and building upon its successes, Turkey's entrepreneurs are poised for continued growth and success in the years to come. It's crucial to acknowledge that the tourism sector boasts numerous structural features that present ample opportunities for female entrepreneurs. From product diversification to emerging tourism trends and a rapidly expanding industry, women have endless possibilities to leave their mark in this field. It's imperative to recognize the potential that exists here and provide unwavering support for women seeking to pursue entrepreneurial ventures within the tourism sector. With the appropriate resources and guidance, there are no boundaries to what women can accomplish in this exhilarating and ever-evolving industry (Yildirim et al., 2020). In Turkey, women are presented with greater job opportunities at various levels in larger hotel organizations. This is due to the higher level of professionalism and departmentalization found in these organizations, compared

to smaller hotels and pensions. This is a positive development for women in the hospitality industry, as it provides them with the chance to showcase their skills and make a significant contribution to the growth and success of the industry (Tucker, 2007). As Tosun (2001) has pointed out, Turkey is currently experiencing some very difficult macro-economic challenges. High unemployment rates, rapid growth of the working-age population, high inflation and interest rates, as well as increasing deficits in the current account of balance of payments and mounting debt are all contributing to this situation. These challenges are not easy to tackle, but with the right strategies and policies in place, Turkey can overcome them and emerge stronger than ever before. It's important to remain optimistic and focused on finding solutions to these issues. Given these challenges, it is clear that there is a pressing need for the development of tourism as a long-term investment. While there may be short-term benefits to be gained, it is essential to prioritize long-term growth and stability in order to address these underlying economic issues. I strongly believe that women's participation in entrepreneurship is crucial for the growth and success of both developed and developing economies. A thriving economy that benefits everyone is only possible through entrepreneurship. As someone who understands the positive impact of entrepreneurship, I cannot stress enough the significance of encouraging individuals to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams. It is important to empower more women to take the leap and achieve success as entrepreneurs.

According to literature, most of the touristic organisations are the small and medium sized enterprises, and majority of those enterprises are owned and managed by men (Jaafar et al., 2011). Female entrepreneurship in tourism industry has been examined mostly in a regional context. In their 2018 study, Serafimova and Petrevska analyzed the role of women who run tourism businesses in Macedonia. They aimed to identify the major obstacles that prevent them from advancing their entrepreneurial pursuits. The study sheds light on the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the tourism industry, and highlights the need for support and resources to help them overcome these obstacles. Vujko et al., (2019) examined the women's empowerment in the tourism industry in the rural, developing-context of Serbia. In 2022, Ghosh conducted a thorough investigation into the factors that drive female entrepreneurship in the tourism and hospitality sector across 30 European nations. The research aimed to uncover the key determinants that affect women's ability to start and run successful ventures in this industry. By analyzing a wide range of data, including economic indicators, social and cultural factors, and regulatory frameworks, Ghosh was able to identify several critical factors that significantly impact female entrepreneurship in the tourism and hospitality sector. How female entrepreneurs in the tourism sector develop their networks in the Sri Lankan context has been examined by Surangi (2022). In the Turkish tourism industry, there seems to be limited research that is devoted to entrepreneurship. However, there have been some notable exemptions to this trend, with studies focusing on the context of sustainability (Tosun, 2001; Tosun, 1998), economic contribution (Dincer et al., 2015), refugee entrepreneurship (Alrawadieh et al., 2021; Alrawadieh et al., 2019), human resources (Yesiltas, 2010) and women (Tucker, 2007). However, as they are considered as a new engine of growth in developing countries, there is a large body of literature examined the importance of Turkish women entrepreneurship. However, less of the literature has examined the women existence in tourism industry. Unlike the management literature, very few study examined the obstacles of women in tourism industry, even though women entrepreneurs in tourism industry is higher than men.

5. Conclusion

The field of tourism entrepreneurship is increasingly acknowledging the importance of gender as a critical factor. It is important to acknowledge that while tourism entrepreneurship is often encouraged as a means of offering women flexible and varied employment options, research cautions that it could also reinforce traditional gender roles by offering temporary and part-time positions in industries that are traditionally associated with a specific gender.

Turkish women entrepreneurs are determined to succeed in tourism and believe that their education and experience make them well-prepared for the task. They are confident that there are no limits to what they can achieve in this field. However, it is important to remember that tourism entrepreneurship can sometimes reinforce traditional gender roles, as it often provides temporary and part-time positions in industries that are traditionally associated with a specific gender. Despite this confidence, they face obstacles due to Turkey's paternalistic environment and cultural factors. It is important to address these issues in order to support and encourage the entrepreneurship of Turkish women, who have the potential to contribute greatly to the country's economic growth and stability. Therefore, future research can analyse the impact of the regional culture on women entrepreneurs in tourism industry. Women entrepreneurship in Family-owned tourism enterprises, obstacles of women entrepreneurs in different sectors in tourism industry, social women entrepreneurship in Turkey tourism industry and LGBTQ entrepreneurs in this sector can be ideas for the future research for the researchers in this area.

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