

Gender Perspective: Challenges and Opportunities in Diverse Tourism Setting

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Abstract: The tourism industry continues to expand as a powerful catalyst for cultural exchange and economic development. However, disparities in travel experiences particularly those influenced by gender identity and cultural background remain underexplored. This qualitative study investigates the challenges and opportunities encountered by LGBTQ+ travelers in diverse tourism contexts, with a focus on Santiago City, Philippines. Anchored in Sustainable Development Goals 5 (Gender Equality), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), the research explores how stereotypes, safety concerns, and social norms affect the inclusivity and accessibility of tourism experiences.

Using purposive sampling, data were collected from 15 LGBTQ+ individuals through in-depth interviews guided by an instrument focused on gender-related challenges, opportunities, and personal insights. Thematic analysis, supported by NVivo software, was employed to identify patterns in participant experiences and perceptions. The findings reveal that LGBTQ+ travelers often face discrimination, safety risks, and cultural insensitivities, which hinder their full participation in tourism. Despite these barriers, the study also identified spaces for empowerment, such as inclusive policies, supportive community networks, and awareness initiatives.

The study concludes that a more inclusive tourism industry requires proactive strategies, including gender-sensitive education, anti-discrimination policies, stakeholder collaboration, and legislative support such as the passage of the SOGIE Equality Bill. By recognizing the diverse experiences of travelers, particularly those from marginalized communities, tourism stakeholders can foster a safer, more equitable, and culturally responsive environment. This research contributes valuable insights to both academic discourse and practical tourism planning, promoting a more just and inclusive tourism sector aligned with global development goals.

Keyword: *Inclusive Tourism, Gender Perspectives, LGBTQ+ Travelers, Tourism Safety, Cultural Sensitivity.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The global tourism sector is thriving, with over 1.5 billion international visitors recorded in 2019 (UNWTO, 2020). Nevertheless, various studies indicate that tourism experiences can differ markedly based on a traveler's gender, emphasizing the importance of adopting a more inclusive and fair approach. Travelers typically seek to immerse themselves in new cultures, actively pursuing authentic experiences and engaging deeply with local traditions.

However, this quest can be fraught with challenges. The understanding of "authenticity" can vary and may be influenced by stereotypes, leading to misunderstandings and misinterpretations (World Woman Tourism, 2022).

Furthermore, the tourism industry can contribute to the cultural assimilation of societies, potentially diminishing the unique traits of local communities. The tourism experience becomes increasingly intricate when considering a gender perspective. Travelers' experiences can vary significantly based on their gender identity.

For example, women may encounter a higher likelihood of facing harassment, discrimination, and safety concerns in specific destinations. According to Khalil (2022), this could restrict their freedom of movement and participation in cultural exchange. Conversely, men may confront different challenges, such as being perceived as wealthier or enjoying greater opportunities for specific endeavors. The tourism industry must address issues derived from the intersection of

gender perspectives. Prejudices and discrimination arising from gender can adversely affect travelers, particularly women, posing safety risks and hindering their mobility. Nonetheless, these hurdles also present opportunities to promote equitable and accessible travel experiences, thereby fostering cultural understanding and generating economic benefits for local communities.

Despite the expansion and potential for cultural exchange within the tourism sector, there is a significant lack of insight regarding how gender perspectives shape travelers' experiences across diverse locations. This research aims to investigate how the gender perspectives present both challenges and opportunities for travelers in different tourism contexts. The research problem acknowledges the need to move beyond a broad understanding of tourism and delve into the nuanced experiences of travelers, particularly those facing unique challenges due to their gender identity.

By exploring this intersection, the study aspires to foster a more comprehensive and equitable approach to the development and execution of tourism. The study aims to investigate the intricate and interconnected relationship between gender perspectives and tourism in various contexts. By analyzing the expectations, values, and experiences of tourists and local communities, the study aims to grasp how these elements shape challenges and opportunities within the tourism industry.

Welcoming diversity is essential for the future of tourism. Nevertheless, it is equally important to understand the complexities and interconnected relationships of gender perspectives to ensure that travel is inclusive and enriching for all.

A. Background of the Study

Tourism is a dynamic global industry that fosters cultural exchange, economic development, and mutual understanding among diverse populations. As the sector continues to expand, it becomes increasingly imperative to ensure that tourism experiences are equitable, inclusive, and accessible to all. This involves a nuanced exploration of how gender identities and cultural backgrounds shape the experiences, opportunities, and challenges of travelers in various contexts. Historically, tourism research has tended to emphasize general demographic trends, often overlooking the personal and socially embedded experiences of individual travelers. However, travelers' identities particularly in terms of gender and ethnicity profoundly influence their mobility, safety, access to services, and engagement with destinations.

Gender perspectives in tourism have gained greater academic attention, reflecting a broader recognition of diversity and inclusion in the sector. Despite this progress, structural biases and stereotypes continue to affect how individuals, especially women and LGBTQ+ travelers, experience tourism. Research indicates that gender-based challenges persist across many destinations, including limited mobility, safety concerns, discrimination, and unequal access to tourism opportunities (World Women Tourism, 2022; Khalil, 2022). Female travelers, for example, often face risks

such as harassment or gender-based violence, while LGBTQ+ tourists may encounter verbal abuse, social exclusion, or institutional discrimination (Stratton, 2019; Menze & Pfalz, 2022). These experiences can significantly constrain travel decisions, from destination selection to participation in local activities, ultimately diminishing the overall travel experience and perpetuating social inequalities.

Within the Philippine tourism context, these issues are particularly relevant given the country's rich cultural diversity and the presence of over 175 ethnolinguistic groups (William, 2023). While the Philippines is widely regarded as a hospitable and culturally vibrant destination, challenges remain in terms of fully understanding and addressing how cultural identity, gender norms, and societal expectations intersect to shape the experiences of travelers. Cultural practices, such as hierarchical respect and traditional gender roles, may unintentionally limit inclusivity for certain groups. Safety issues especially for women traveling alone or LGBTQ+ individuals in conservative areas further complicate their travel experiences (Adel, 2023). Yet, despite these concerns, there is a notable gap in research examining how tourism policies and practices address these dynamics and promote equitable tourism for all.

The call for inclusive tourism aligns with several global development objectives. Specifically, this study supports Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality, by examining gender-specific challenges and advocating for equitable participation in tourism. It also addresses SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, by focusing on the experiences of marginalized groups such as LGBTQ+ travelers and ethnic minorities, and SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, by proposing inclusive tourism practices that foster respect, safety, and institutional responsiveness within the industry.

This study seeks to explore the multifaceted ways in which gender and cultural identities influence tourism experiences in the Philippines. It aims to assess the current landscape of tourism policies and practices through a gender-sensitive lens and to identify barriers and facilitators to inclusive travel. By doing so, the research intends to generate evidence-based recommendations that promote safety, cultural awareness, and equitable access to tourism opportunities for all travelers regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, or cultural background.

Furthermore, the study will utilize qualitative methods to capture in-depth insights from various stakeholders, including travelers, tourism workers, and policymakers. This approach is essential to unpack the complex interplay between social norms, institutional practices, and individual experiences. The findings are expected to contribute not only to academic discourse but also to the practical enhancement of tourism strategies that prioritize inclusivity, sustainability, and respect for diversity.

The global tourism industry undergoes transformation; there is a critical need to prioritize inclusive and equitable practices. This research contributes to this agenda by

highlighting the intersectional challenges faced by women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and culturally diverse travelers within the Philippine context. Addressing these issues through informed policy and practice is key to achieving a more just, inclusive, and culturally sensitive tourism sector both in the Philippines and beyond.

B. Research Question

➤ *What is the lived experience of LGBTQ+ people during their local and international travel?*

• Theoretical Framework

This study explores the gender perspective within diverse tourism settings, analyzing the challenges and opportunities that arise. Several key theories from tourism studies are provided to come up with a reliable theoretical framework.

The Theory of Tourism Experience can assist in analyzing the impact of a gender perspective on tourists' travel experiences based on their understanding and interpretation. An example is when tourists seek experiences that align with their wants, needs, and beliefs, or encounter difficulties due to cultural disparities or gender-based discrimination. This theory seeks to comprehend the multifaceted aspects of tourist experiences, encompassing both cognitive and emotional elements (Fu & Luo, 2023). The way their different gender shapes tourist travel. This means that other travelers have different experiences during their trip. Sometimes, these differences can lead to misunderstandings or discrimination, particularly among travelers. However, embracing diversity enables the tourism industry to create a more inclusive and welcoming travel environment.

Against the backdrop of intersectionality, LGBTQ youth of color face uniquely heightened discrimination and

victimization. Price et al. revealed that LGBTQ youth, particularly those of color, encounter significant mental health challenges exacerbated by pervasive social discrimination and victimization, which aligns with the theory of intersectionality that emphasizes the compounded effects of multiple stigmatized identities (Price, et al., 2019). Similarly, Le, et al. (2024) highlight that Latinx sexual minority men experience discomfort within the broader LGBTQ community, which can adversely affect their psychological well-being, thereby reinforcing the importance of applying an intersectional lens when examining the experiences of multiply marginalized populations (Le, et al., 2024). These findings substantiate the importance of considering not only sexual orientation but also race and cultural background in addressing the experiences of LGBTQ individuals.

The Intersectionality Theory, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, is crucial in understanding the complex issues faced by individuals with diverse gender identities. In the tourism industry, intersectionality allows us to realize that the experiences of transgender women of color may be very different from those of white men (Monaco, et al., 2024).

Gender Studies and Feminist Theory offer an essential perspective for examining the impact of gender roles, stereotypes, and abilities on tourism experiences. These theories highlight how gender influences the travel experiences of different genders and how gender inequality manifests in various aspects of tourism, including employment, entrepreneurship, and access to resources. Examining tourism through a gender perspective provides insight into the unique challenges faced by women and LGBTQ+ individuals, as well as the potential for enhancing inclusivity and equality within the tourism industry (Domecq & Perez, 2020).

• Conceptual Framework



Fig 1 Gendered Experiences in Tourism.

Source: Moser & Harding, 2024

This framework is centered on gender perspectives within diverse tourism settings. Its relevance to a current study focusing on gender in tourism hinges on the research's specific aims. However, several key overlaps are apparent. Both the framework and the study share a focus on gender as a primary element, examining its influence on experiences and opportunities within the tourism sector. Furthermore, the framework's inclusion of "Intersectionality and LGBTQ+ Experiences" and "Gender and Power" directly connects to the broader considerations of gender equality and the impact of power dynamics often found within such research. The framework's emphasis on "Gender and Sustainability" aligns with research focusing on the equitable and inclusive aspects of sustainable tourism practices. Finally, the framework's components on "Gendered Entrepreneur" and "Gendered Employee" indicate an interest in analyzing how gender shapes roles and participation within the tourism industry.

This framework of Gender Experiences in Tourism by Caroline Moser and Sandra Hardling explores the influence of gender in the tourism industry, concentrating on four (4) interrelated domains: the obstacles encountered by female entrepreneurs (Gendered Entrepreneur), the disparities faced by women in the workforce (Gendered Employee), the relationship between gender and broader sustainability objectives (Gender and Sustainability), and the effect of societal power dynamics on gender roles (Gender and Power). Importantly, it includes the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals, highlighting how their overlapping identities shape their experiences within the tourism industry. The cyclical structure highlights the interconnected nature of these themes, illustrating how gender inequality appears in various facets of the tourism sector.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Gendered Entrepreneur

Women are crucial in the tourism sector, which predominantly employs them. However, female business owners in tourism encounter specific obstacles in the digital landscape, such as increased susceptibility to online sexual harassment and breaches of privacy (Yang, et al., 2023). Despite their growing numbers, the field of entrepreneurship remains male-dominated (Figuerola-Domecq, et al., 2020). Significant gender-related differences in entrepreneurship include education, experience, networking opportunities, access to capital, and cultural influences (Yang et al., 2023). Additionally, in many societies, women often bear a disproportionate share of household duties compared to men (Olsson et al., 2021). The George's21 study investigates the challenges that LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs face within the tourism industry, especially in Trinidad and Tobago. Despite their valuable contributions to sustainable tourism, these entrepreneurs and travelers deal with obstacles stemming from social and cultural prejudices. The study indicates that restrictive regulations, lack of marketing assistance, and limited access to funding are a result of the existing cultural stigma. This scenario highlights the intricate connection between the challenges of entrepreneurship and the experiences of LGBTQ+ travelers, both in their home country and abroad.

B. Gender and Sustainability

Gendered sustainability acknowledges that gender is just one among numerous social identities that shape individuals' experiences. It promotes an intersectional perspective that considers how gender intersects with other aspects, such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Lesnikov, et al., 2023). Research on tourism sustainability highlights that achieving gender equality and understanding intersectionality are crucial for travel that aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Moreno-Alarcón, et al., 2019). Studies examining these intersectional aspects (Ong, et al., 2020) show that bisexual and transgender tourists are often overlooked, indicating a need for more inclusive frameworks in tourism. Additionally, research has found that transgender travelers make their destination choices based on how well they feel their identities are affirmed and their safety is protected (Wu, et al., 2021). Qualitative findings from LGBTQ+ travelers further emphasize the importance of authenticity, safety, and spaces that affirm queer identities, even in the context of sustainability efforts (Ozeren, et al., 2024).

C. Gendered Employee

Women working in tourism often face unequal pay, poor working conditions, and limited opportunities for career advancement. The obstacles to women's advancement in their careers are diverse. Although women's participation in the labor force and their roles in mid-level management is increasing worldwide (Bazazo, et al., 2017), achieving top leadership roles remains challenging due to issues such as family responsibilities, gender biases, and male-centric corporate cultures (Freund, et al., 2021). Women are more potent in low-level, part-time, casual, and seasonal jobs and are also more likely to face poor working conditions, unequal opportunities, violence, mistreatment, stress, and sexual harassment (Hatchings, 2020). Quezon, et al. (2024) highlight the gender-based segregation in the Filipino hospitality sector, illustrating how women are relegated to low-wage support positions, experience ongoing salary disparities, and encounter unhelpful workplace cultures that hinder their career progression. These same cultures also affect interactions with LGBTQ+ travelers, as employees burdened by stress and stigma may be less equipped to deliver affirming or considerate customer service. In Spain, Medina-Garrido, et al. (2023) reveal that women working in tourism experience higher levels of work-family conflict. Implementing gender-sensitive policies, such as flexible work options, not only increases job satisfaction but also strengthens organizational commitment. Notably, such supportive measures not only benefit women but also contribute to more inclusive work environments, which in turn enhance the experiences of LGBTQ+ travelers by promoting staff well-being and openness.

D. Gender and Power

As noted in Santos's 2023 research, societal institutions such as family, education, economy, and politics significantly contribute to the formation and continuation of gender norms by creating and supporting a hierarchical system that disadvantages one gender, resulting in an unequal allocation of resources, opportunities, and power based on gender.

The interplay between gender and power is a critical area of research in contemporary social science, particularly in terms of how these dynamics influence various societal outcomes, including representation in leadership and health-related behaviors. A nuanced understanding of gender perspectives is essential for addressing issues of inequality and empowerment across different social contexts.

One fundamental aspect of gender dynamics is the representation of women in leadership roles. Research indicates that women minister often attains their positions through professional credentials rather than traditional political pathways, suggesting a complex process of ascent in male-dominated political structures (Lee & Park, 2018). This aligns with findings suggesting that social biases related to gender roles hinder women's aspirations and limit their participation in leadership (Fritz & Knippenberg, 2019; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Thus, understanding the institutional frameworks and stereotypes that shape leadership aspirations is crucial for informing policies aimed at promoting gender equity in political representation and other leadership spheres (Holmes, et al., 2024).

E. Intersectionality and LGBTQ+ Experiences

Intersectionality serves as an important framework to examine how interconnected identities such as gender, sexual orientation, race, and socioeconomic status influence the experiences of LGBTQ+ travelers in different tourism settings. Prayag, et al., (2023) demonstrate that travel can enhance psychological well-being and contribute to the formation of self-identity for LGBTQ+ individuals. Their research indicates that while travel can be empowering, these advantages are not uniformly experienced by all individuals. Those from higher socioeconomic tiers typically enjoy greater freedom and affirmation when traveling, whereas individuals from less privileged backgrounds encounter persistent obstacles. This highlights the interplay of social class and sexual identity in determining tourism outcomes. Building on this narrative, Vorobjovas-Pinta, et al., (2024) examine queer tourism geographies, utilizing the Sydney Mardi Gras as a case study. They show that events promoted as inclusive may still exclude LGBTQ+ people of color, as prevailing white, middle-class cultural narratives often overshadow them. Their analysis emphasizes the necessity for equity-driven tourism planning that acknowledges how race, class, and sexuality converge to yield unequal degrees of visibility, safety, and a sense of belonging within LGBTQ+ tourism environments. Adding more depth to this discussion, Monterrubio, et al. (2022) examine the experiences of transgender men in Latin America. Their qualitative research uncovers that intersecting challenges such as legal invisibility, misgendering, and a lack of gender-affirming facilities generate ongoing emotional and physical strain during travel. Nonetheless, the study also highlights travel's transformative potential, where individuals can validate their gender identities in locations that offer more freedom compared to their home settings. The authors advocate for structural reforms, including inclusive policy frameworks, staff education, and gender-neutral amenities, to provide better support for transgender travelers. Expanding the body of intersectional tourism research, Cheng, et al. (2021)

investigate the motivations, choices, and limitations faced by Italian transgender travelers. Their findings show that the desire for gender affirmation often drives travel. However, structural barriers, such as misgendering at airports and the absence of gender-inclusive facilities, impede this experience, prompting travelers to prefer more supportive destinations. In addition, Monterrubio, et al. (2021) analyze the emotional and physical challenges transgender individuals confront in Mexico, which include issues related to restroom access, anxieties about public transport, and societal misrecognition. Travelers often rely on coping strategies and adjust their behavior to ensure their safety and well-being.

III. METHODS

A. Research Design

This research employed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research studies individuals' in-depth experiences through interviews, focus groups, observation, content analysis, visual methods, and life histories. Qualitative research extends beyond the use of qualitative methods alone. One key aspect of qualitative research is its ability to uncover issues through the lens of study participants and comprehend their interpretations of behavior, events, or objects (Hennink, et al., 2020), as confirmed by Phillimore & Goodson (2004) as qualitative approaches are utilized to gather information on activities, events, incidents, and behaviors in order to comprehend actions, issues, and processes within their social environment.

The current study is well-suited for exploring tourists' perceptions of their travel experiences, understanding the interconnectedness of various social identities, and examining the development of awareness and skills necessary for engaging with diverse backgrounds.

The researchers collected data using a purposive sampling approach to ensure a representative sample of three target groups: tourism officers, managers of tourist attractions, and LGBTQ+ individuals. The researcher used an open-ended interview guide to determine the gender perspective on diverse tourism opportunities.

B. Study Site and Participants

This study was conducted in Santiago City. The city is the gateway to Cagayan Valley and the region's commercial hub. It houses various tourist destinations, including the Dariuk Hills and other attractions in religious and cultural sites.

The study's respondents were LGBTQ+ travelers within Santiago City, the center. They were chosen because they are immediately responsible for facing the opportunities and challenges of diverse tourism destinations and activities. The LGBTQ+ community, as a significant and growing segment of the tourism market, offers a unique perspective on the inclusivity and accessibility of tourism experiences. Their participation has contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the current state of tourism in Santiago City and identified potential areas for improvement.

C. Population, Sampling Size, and Sampling Technique

The study consists of 15 individuals who were identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community and currently residing in Santiago City, Isabela. The respondents were selected to provide valuable insights and perspectives relative to the experiences, challenges, and opportunities faced by LGBTQ+ individuals during their travels, both locally and internationally.

This research employed purposive sampling to select participants from the specific group of LGBTQ+ individuals in Santiago City, Isabela. The criteria for selection included a travel experience, both local and international, as well as representation from various gender identities within the LGBTQ+ community. Possible participants were recognized through the Santiago City government, tourism businesses, and LGBTQ+ community groups. The sample size for each group was determined based on data saturation, with recruitment continuing until no new information was revealed through additional data collection. This method guaranteed a suitable sample size to reflect varied viewpoints while enhancing the efficiency of data collection.

D. Instrument

The interview guide is divided into four (4) major parts: the participants' background section, the section on gender challenges in tourism, the section on opportunities and best practices, and the final section, which includes personal perspectives and recommendations. The participants' background section outlines the respondents' information, including their years of involvement in the tourism industry and their respective roles. The next section of the interview contains their experience and observations among the target groups of the study. The third section of the interview is their observation of the opportunities they experienced and observed. Moreover, the last part of the interview invites participants to share their thoughts and recommendations. Furthermore, the researchers express their gratitude to the participants for their participation.

The qualitative study focuses on an open-ended question rather than a numerical scale. Responses are analyzed through thematic coding and content analysis to identify pattern themes and insights. The interview guide is designed specifically to ensure alignment with the research objectives. The questions were crafted to focus too heavily on the topics explored in the research questionnaire, encouraging participants to discuss their experiences in depth. The instrument for collecting qualitative data on cultural identity and gender perspective in tourism allowed for an understanding of the experiences and perspectives of diverse travelers.

E. Data Gathering Procedure

- The study titled "Gender Perspective: Challenges and Opportunities in Diverse Tourism Settings," has been approved. Researchers then reviewed existing research, developed a framework, and created a questionnaire to gather information.

- Participants are recruited from tourism settings. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and observations.
- Data were analyzed using qualitative methods. Findings were interpreted, key themes were highlighted, and a research paper was written.
- Participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits.
- The questionnaire is available in both online and paper formats. Participants' responses are kept anonymous and confidential.
- Data were stored securely and can be accessed only by authorized researchers. Measures are in place to prevent unauthorized access or changes to the data.

F. Data Analysis

This research employed a qualitative approach to investigate how gender influences people's travel experiences. The study employed a thematic analysis to identify key concepts in interviews and open-ended survey responses. This involved carefully reading the data to understand what people are saying. The researchers sought to identify patterns and factors related to travel challenges, safety concerns for different genders, and how people's backgrounds influence their travel choices.

The thematic analysis goes beyond just listing themes. It aims to understand the details and complexities of the data. By doing this, the researchers can observe how cultural identity and gender influence people's challenges and opportunities when traveling in different places. This provides comprehensive information on travelers' diverse experiences, enabling a deeper understanding of the complexities of tourism and its impact on individuals. This research primarily employed qualitative methods, with some statistical views incorporated to complement the thematic analysis. This involves systematically analyzing the dependent variable of the text data to identify patterns and themes, quantifying the process of specific words, phrases, or concepts within the data, and identifying patterns in language use. This study utilized NVivo software to analyze the text data and identify keywords, phrases, and themes. Software tools are used to analyze the text data and generate reports on word frequency, theme, prevalence, and other content-related metrics.

G. Ethical Considerations

The study benefits diverse genders, especially LGBTQ+ travelers, including attracting a wider range of tourists and promoting gender awareness. The benefits for the LGBTQ+ community include greater visibility, recognition, and safe, welcoming travel. Risks and potential dangers are considered. Individuals of diverse genders are not subjected to discrimination or harassment. To address these risks, collaboration between tourism officers, place managers, and LGBTQ+ communities is essential. Anti-discrimination policies and clear communication ensure that all participants feel safe, respected, and included. By prioritizing ethical practices and fostering open dialogue, tourism stakeholders can work together to create a more welcoming and enriching experience.

Recognizing their experiences is essential for creating tourism policies and services that are inclusive of their needs and identities. Ethical research practices must safeguard confidentiality, ensure informed consent, and approach emotional sensitivities when documenting personal stories, especially those related to previous trauma or discrimination. By incorporating these ethical principles into tourism planning and research, the study helps cultivate an environment that not only protects but also empowers LGBTQ+ travelers to engage in and enjoy tourism experiences freely, without fear or bias.

IV. RESULTS

The following data and results are presented in a tabular form thematically.

➤ Research Question 1.

- *In your experience, what are the most common gender-related challenges faced by individuals in the tourism industry?*

Based on the responses, the experiences and observations regarding gender-based discrimination or inequality in tourism settings vary among individuals. Informants 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 reported experiencing discrimination in promotion practices and salary gaps linked to gender, as well as societal expectations about gender roles influencing job assignments and leadership opportunities. They also reported experiencing gender-based stereotypes and workplace harassment. Additionally, many colleagues lacked awareness or sensitivity regarding gender diversity, which contributed to exclusion and misunderstanding. Another key theme that emerged was the cultural and workplace variation in acceptance. Informants 1 and 5 note that acceptance of gender diversity and LGBTQ+ individuals varies significantly across different countries and companies. Informants 2, 6, 13, and 15 reported no significant issues, describing their workplaces

as respectful, inclusive, and equitable in terms of treatment and opportunities. In contrast, a practical gender-specific challenge was highlighted by Informant 14, who mentioned that transgender employee shared the difficulty of using gender-appropriate public facilities (e.g., restrooms), pointing to a broader issue of inadequate infrastructure and a lack of gender sensitivity in public and professional environments. As a result of the study, "Navigating Gender Diversity in Tourism: Between Inclusion and Discrimination" is necessary as it captures the dual reality about growing inclusivity in some areas, but continued challenges may be faced, as explained by the informants, such as stereotypes, discrimination, and limited understanding of LGBTQ+ individuals.

➤ Research Question 2.

- *Have you personally experienced or witnessed gender-based discrimination or inequality in tourism setting? Can you share an example?*

Based on the responses, the differences in opportunities for men and women in leadership positions within the tourism industry vary among individuals. Informants shared differing views on the opportunities available for men and women in leadership roles within the tourism industry. Informants 2, 4, 5, 7, and 12 discussed experiences reflecting employment discrimination, including discrimination in hiring processes based on gender identity. Workplace inequality and a lack of career advancement, as demonstrated by informants 4, 5, and 7. Informants 8, 9, 10, 11, and 14 stated their experiences about public harassment in public places with LGBTQ+ individuals. Moreover, gender appearance bias and grooming standards emerged as a concern for Informants 2 and 14 stated, and they were subjected to scrutiny and criticism for not adhering to traditional gender appearance standards. Although Informants 2, 6, 13, and 15 did not report personal encounters with discrimination, many of them still witnessed acts of discrimination involving bias or unfair treatment toward others.

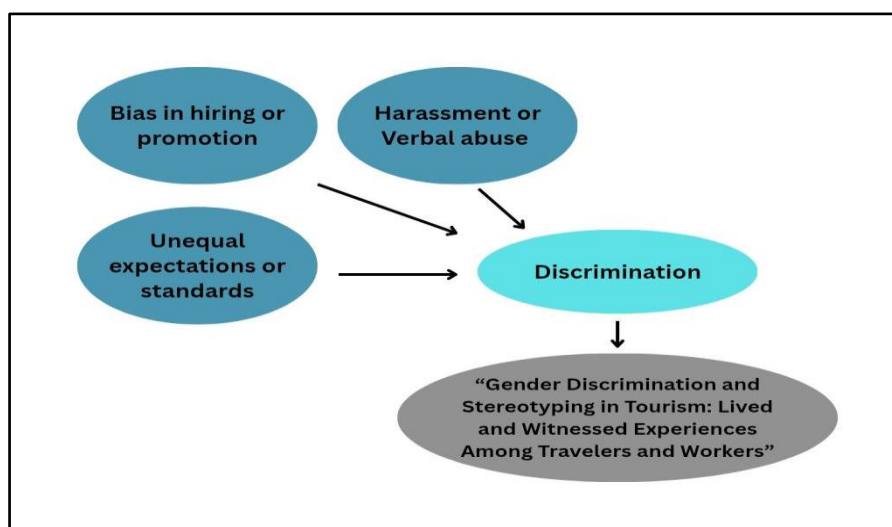


Fig 2 Gender-Based Discrimination in Tourism Setting

As a result of the study, "Gender Discrimination and Stereotyping in Tourism: Lived and Witnessed Experiences

Among Travelers and Workers" emphasizes the real-world impact of gender bias, including bias in hiring or promotion

practices, unequal expectations and standards, and experiences of harassment or verbal abuse. It showcases how both travelers and workers are affected by entrenched stereotypes and prejudices, revealing a pattern of unequal treatment based on gender. These lived and observed experiences point to the need for stronger policies and awareness efforts to combat workplace discrimination.

➤ *Research Question 3.*

- *Do you think there are differences in opportunities for men and women in leadership positions within the tourism industry? Why or why not?*

Based on the responses, the differences in opportunities for men and women in leadership positions within the tourism industry vary among individuals. Informants 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 12, and 14 stated the presence of a leadership bias favoring men. This is often due to the assumption that men are naturally more authoritative or capable of managing people and making decisions, reinforcing traditional gendered views of Leadership. Informants 8, 11, and 14 mentioned that physically demanding jobs in the tourism sector tend to be assigned to men, driven by the belief that men are inherently stronger and more suited for labor-intensive roles. This stereotype limits opportunities for women regardless of their actual physical ability or interest. Additionally, systematic barriers for women were cited by Informants 5 and 7, pointing out systemic obstacles that prevent women from advancing in their careers. These include limited access to training, fewer promotional opportunities, and workplace cultures that are less supportive of women's leadership development. Despite the prevalence of these issues, there were also some counterpoints or neutral views. Informants 1, 6, 12, 13, and 15 expressed neutral or differing opinions, suggesting that gender bias is not as prominent in their experiences or workplaces.

As a result of the study, "Persistent Gender Bias in Leadership and Job Roles within the Tourism Industry " addresses how leadership roles and job responsibilities are often distributed unfairly along gender lines. Unequal treatment, workplace stereotyping, and discriminatory norms prevent women and gender-diverse individuals from advancing into managerial or high-level positions. The theme underlines how persistent gender biases shape perceptions of competence and suitability, ultimately limiting equal opportunity and reinforcing existing power structures.

➤ *Research Question 4.*

- *Are there specific safety concerns related to gender that affect tourism workers or travelers? How are these addressed?*

Based on the responses, the specific safety concerns related to gender that affect tourism workers and travelers vary among individuals and are shaped by identity, location, and occupational context. Informants 1, 4, 8, 9, and 10 discussed that the LGBTQ+ community and women in tourism, both workers and travelers, face discrimination based on their gender identities or sexual orientation.

Informants 5 and 7 further elaborated on the safety concern, mentioning that the higher risk of harassment, discrimination, and violence is faced by women and LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly those workers and solo travelers who face this in the tourism industry. Adding to this, cultural variation in gender acceptance was noted by Informants 1, 3, and 4 that acceptance of gender identity varies depending on the cultures and places they are visiting. Informants 5, 7, and 9 discussed the need for inclusive and secure policies, such as escort services, safe accommodations, and safe transportation, as well as company policies, to create a safer environment.



Fig 3 Safety Concerns related to Gender that affect Tourism workers or travelers

As a result of the study, "Addressing Gender-Based Discrimination and Enhancing Safety in the Tourism Industry" centers on the issue of discrimination as a

consequence of three (3) critical factors: prejudice, barriers to equality and inclusion, and the need for inclusivity. Prejudice represents the ingrained biases that fuel negative treatment

based on gender identity, while structural and cultural barriers prevent equitable participation and representation in tourism. At the same time, the increasing need for inclusivity reflects a growing awareness and demand for more diverse and respectful environments. Together, these factors highlight how systemic discrimination persists and the urgent necessity of addressing it to enhance safety, equality, and a sense of belonging within the tourism sector.

➤ *Research Question 5.*

- *Have you noticed any efforts to promote gender inclusivity and equality in the tourism industry? Can you describe some initiatives or policies?*

Based on the responses, the efforts and initiatives to promote gender inclusivity and equality in the tourism industry vary among individuals, yet many shared a positive outlook on ongoing progress.

Informants 1, 5, 7, 13, and 15 emphasize the importance of programs, policies, and practices focusing on promoting gender equality and inclusivity among diverse genders. In addition to these initiatives, Informants 1, 8, and 9 mentioned the importance of supportive legal and institutional frameworks in preventing gender-based discrimination. They pointed to the relevance of the House Bill 4982, the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Expression (SOGIE) Bill, anti-discrimination laws, and gender and diversity training programs as a crucial step toward preventing gender bias. Further progress was observed in the implementation of gender-neutral and inclusive spaces within the industry. Informants 13 and 15 note that hotels and tourism-related businesses have begun implementing gender-friendly spaces and facilities, such as safe spaces, gender-neutral facilities like restrooms, and LGBTQ+-friendly establishments within the tourism industry. Efforts for awareness and education were highlighted by Informants 2 and 4, the inclusion of subjects like Multicultural diversity in academic programs and gender-sensitive education, which aim to educate future tourism professionals on gender inclusivity.

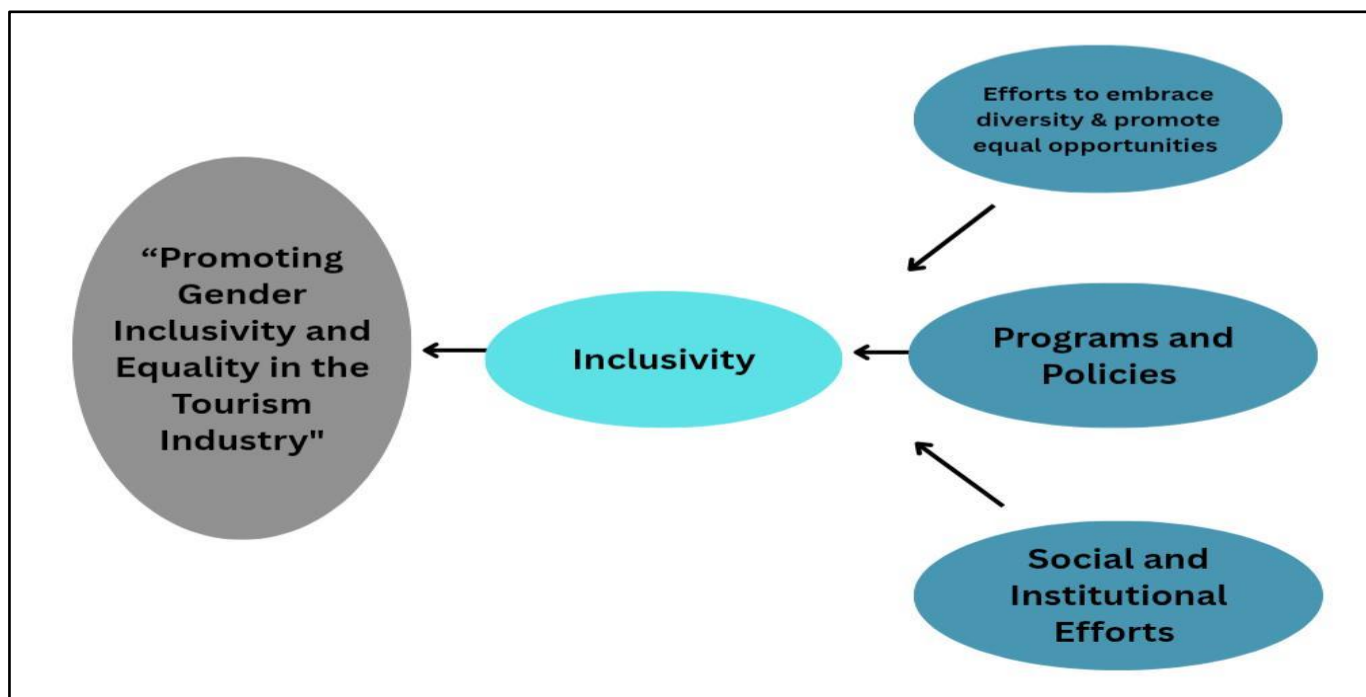


Fig4 Efforts to Promote Gender Inclusivity and Equality

The study, "Promoting Gender Inclusivity and Equality in the Tourism Industry" focuses on fostering inclusivity through deliberate programs, policies, and collaborative efforts across social and institutional levels. It highlights the importance of embracing diversity and promoting equal opportunities as essential steps toward a more equitable tourism sector. By implementing supportive frameworks and cultivating an inclusive culture, the industry can ensure that all individuals, regardless of gender, are respected, represented, and given equal chances to thrive.

➤ *Research Question 6.*

- *What opportunities exist for women and other gender identities in the tourism industry to advance their careers?*

Based on the responses, the opportunities available for women and individuals of diverse gender identities to advance their careers in the tourism industry vary, influenced by both supportive efforts and persistent challenges. Informants 1, 5, 7, and 15 acknowledged the need for inclusive spaces and equal opportunities for women and LGBTQ+ individuals within sectors like hospitality, travel agencies, airline services, and tour operations. They also mentioned initiatives such as gender sensitivity training and more inclusive employment. In terms of Leadership and

career advancement, informants 7, 8, 9, 11, and 15 suggested that women and LGBTQ+ individuals should seek leadership roles, entrepreneurship, and other traditionally male-dominated roles to break stereotypes and showcase their capabilities. The role of gender sensitivity and education was also underscored by Informants 4 and 5, who mentioned the need for strong educational and government support in promoting gender equality and providing the tools for individuals of all gender identities to succeed in professional spaces.

However, some barriers still remain. Informants 3 and 4 pointed out that overcoming barriers to entry continues to be a challenge for women and LGBTQ+ individuals in hiring, managerial positions, and promotion decisions.

As a result of the study, "Empowering Women and Gender-Diverse Individuals for Leadership and Career Advancement in Tourism," the narrative shifts toward empowerment, focusing on increasing access to growth and leadership opportunities for marginalized genders. It emphasizes the importance of education, training, and supportive policies to create an inclusive culture. The push for empowerment seeks not just to address discrimination but to foster environments where gender-diverse individuals can thrive professionally.

➤ Research Question 7.

- *How can tourism businesses and organizations foster a more gender-inclusive environment?*

Based on the responses, observations regarding how tourism businesses and organizations foster a more gender-inclusive environment vary among individuals, reflecting both ongoing challenges and areas for improvement. Informants 3, 5, and 15 pointed out that the tourism industry still favors certain genders in hiring, with women often prioritized for customer-facing roles and men for managerial positions. There is a need to work toward a balanced workforce and gender-diverse leadership teams.

In support of these efforts, Informants 4, 7, and 15 emphasized the need for strong anti-discrimination policies to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for employees of all genders, including LGBTQ+ individuals. Informants 4, 5, and 7 stated that gender sensitivity training should be implemented, and the use of gender-neutral language in the tourism industry to foster a more inclusive workplace for diverse identities. Informants 6, 9, and 13 suggested fair treatment, respect, and empowerment for everyone, including those in the LGBTQ+ community.

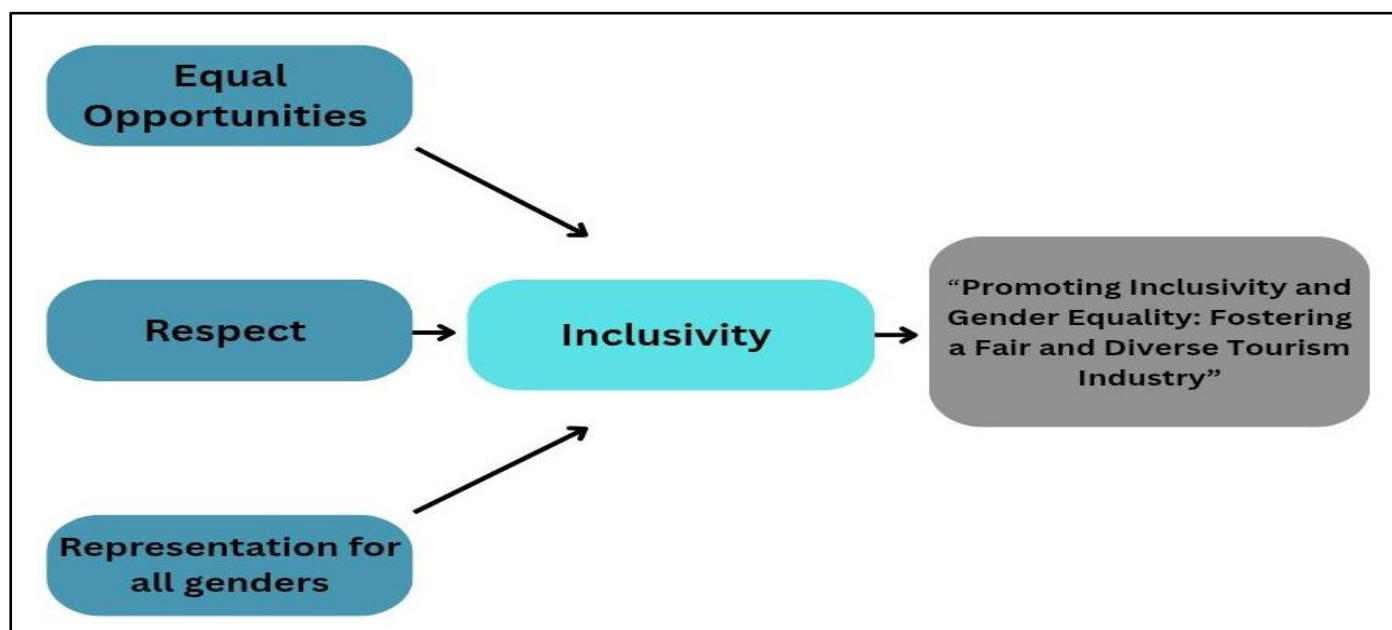


Fig 5 Gender Inclusive Environment

As a result of the study, "Promoting Inclusivity and Gender Equality: Fostering a Fair and Diverse Tourism Industry" centered on creating a tourism industry that values equal representation, respect, and opportunities for all genders. It promotes inclusivity through institutional reform, ensuring fairness in hiring, promotion, and daily operations. The vision is one of a diverse, welcoming industry that not only accepts but celebrates gender diversity.

➤ Research Question 8.

- *Are there any successful gender-related programs or policies that you believe should be adopted more widely?*

According to the responses, perceptions of successful gender-related programs or policies that should be adopted more widely differ among individuals, but many emphasized the importance of institutionalizing protective and empowering frameworks. Informants 1, 2, 6, 8, and 12 stated strong support for the SOGIE Bill, viewing it as essential for safeguarding the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals and

protecting them from discrimination and harassment. In addition to this, Informants 4, 10, and 13 stated the necessity of gender and anti-discrimination policies such as the Anti-Harassment Act and the Gender and Development (GAD) program. They also highlighted the need for safe spaces to shield individuals from gender-based violence and discrimination. Gender equality in the tourism sector was another recurring theme. Informants 5 and 15 discussed the need for gender equality in tourism, a common concern that centered on fair treatment, equal compensation, and the implementation of effective policies promoting equal opportunities and leadership roles for people of all genders, including those in the LGBTQ+ community. Informants 7 and 15 highlighted the efforts to empower women, referring to initiatives such as the Women in Tourism program, leadership development, and mentorship opportunities designed to support the career growth of individuals across all genders.

As a result of the study, “Promoting Inclusivity and Equality: Supporting the SOGIE Bill and Gender in the Tourism Industry” is the most common and best thematic analysis because it focuses on supporting the Implementation of the SOGIE Bill and gender equality policies. Several informants emphasized the importance of creating inclusive, safe spaces for the LGBTQ+ community. As well as advocating for anti-discrimination measures and equal opportunities in the workplace.

➤ Research Question 9.

- *What advice would you give to individuals who face gender-related challenges in tourism settings?*

According to the responses, advice for individuals facing gender-related challenges in tourism settings varies among participants, reflecting diverse but complementary strategies for empowerment and success. Informants 8, 9, 12, and 14 emphasized the importance of self-empowerment and resilience. They encouraged individuals to remain true to themselves and not be discouraged by judgment or negativity from others, highlighting the importance of inner strength in navigating gender-related challenges. Informants 2, 5, 7, 11, and 13 highlighted the value of seeking supportive work environments. They suggested that individuals benefit greatly from supportive environments, where diverse gender identities are respected. They recommended networking, mentorship, and advocating for change as ways to foster a safer, more inclusive professional space. Informants 4, 5, and 10 stated the importance of inclusive practices within tourism and the broader workplace. They noted that implementing such policies not only supports gender equality but also enhances the overall experience for both employees and travelers by creating a more welcoming and respectful atmosphere. Professional development and advancement were viewed as an essential pathway for overcoming systemic gender barriers. Informants 5 and 7 identified access to leadership training, mentorship, and opportunities for career growth as vital tools for overcoming gender-based discrimination. These strategies were seen as empowering and essential for advancing the careers of individuals who face systemic barriers due to their gender identity.

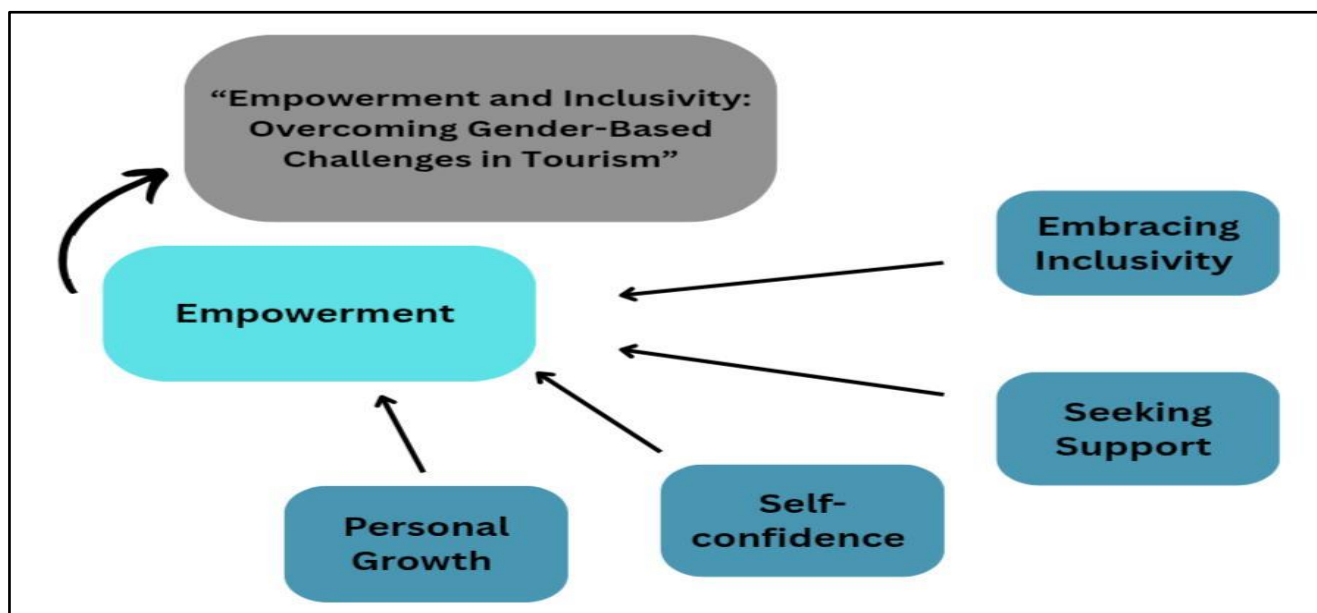


Fig 6 Gender Related Challenges in Tourism Setting

As a result of the study, “Empowerment and Inclusivity: Overcoming Gender-Based Challenges in Tourism” is the most common and best thematic analysis because it focuses on empowerment, such as personal growth, self-confidence, seeking supportive environments, and advocating for inclusivity within the tourism industry. The statements

highlight personal advice for those facing gender-related challenges in tourism, particularly those related to discrimination or biases based on gender identity.

➤ *Research Question 10.*

- *What steps should the government take to ensure gender equality in the tourism sector?*

According to the responses, the steps that the government should take to ensure gender equality in the tourism sector vary among individuals but converge on several key actions. Informants 1, 8, 9, and 14 stated that House Bill 4982, the Sexual and Gender Identity Expression (SOGIE) Bill, should be passed into law to protect LGBTQ+ individuals and promote equal rights. The implementation of anti-discrimination laws was also a prominent recommendation. Informants 5, 7, 10, 13, and 15 highlighted the need for stricter anti-discrimination policies in the tourism industry and other businesses. This includes creating safe workplaces and offering equal opportunities for all genders. Informants 7, 13, and 15 highlighted the importance of promoting women and LGBTQ+ leadership. This includes the need for empowering women and LGBTQ+ individuals by fostering leadership roles, ensuring equal opportunities, and ensuring representation in higher positions. Informants 12 and 4 suggest the need for cultural and societal change, acceptance for all genders is enlightened from a young age, preventing prejudice and stigmas.

The study, “Promoting Inclusivity and Equality: Advocating for the SOGIE Bill and Gender Equality in the Tourism Industry” emphasizes the importance of legislative advocacy and inclusive practices in building a fair tourism industry. It supports the recognition and protection of diverse gender identities, the promotion of equal opportunities, and the implementation of non-discriminatory practices. By advocating for laws and policies such as the SOGIE Bill, this approach aims to institutionalize gender equality and create safe, welcoming spaces for all. The focus is on fostering

inclusivity through both policy reform and social acceptance, ensuring that tourism environments uphold respect and equity for every individual.

➤ *Research Question 11.*

- *In your opinion, how can gender diversity benefit the tourism industry?*

According to the responses, the benefits of gender diversity in the tourism industry vary among individuals but consistently point toward positive impacts on creativity, business outcomes, and inclusivity. Informants 4, 5, 7, 13, and 15 stated that gender diversity, especially LGBTQ+ inclusion, enhances creativity, fresh perspectives, and innovation, leading to better services and tourism experiences. Enhanced customer and tourism experiences were also frequently cited benefits. Informants 1, 7, 12, and 15 noted that inclusivity leads to higher customer satisfaction, broadens travel experiences, and makes tourism more appealing to diverse tourists. The theme of inclusivity and equal opportunity was highlighted by Informants 2, 3, 6, 9, and 11, who pointed out the importance of equal treatment and acknowledgment, ensuring fair opportunities in tourism for all, including LGBTQ+ individuals. Beyond the social benefits, economic and business advantages were also identified. Informants 5, 7, 8, 10, and 13 highlighted how gender diversity positively impacts economic growth, such as through LGBTQ+ festivals attracting international travelers and tourism revenue. Informants 3, 5, and 14 believed that acknowledging LGBTQ+ individuals in the workplace increases employee productivity, job satisfaction, morale, and a better work environment.

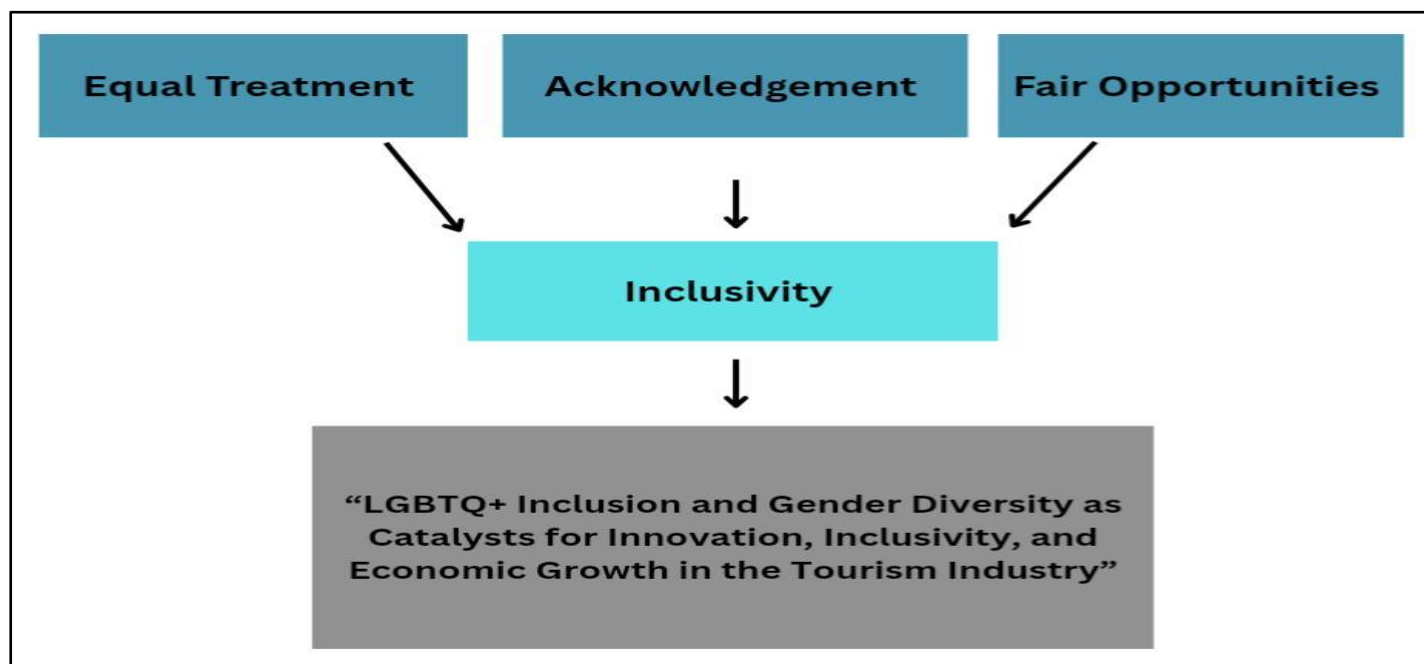


Fig 7 Gender Diversity Benefit the Tourism Industry

“LGBTQ+ Inclusion and Gender Diversity as Catalysts for Innovation, Inclusivity, and Economic Growth in the Tourism Industry” connects inclusivity with broader benefits, arguing that embracing LGBTQ+ inclusion and gender diversity leads to innovation and economic development. It positions fairness and equal treatment not just as moral imperatives but as strategic advantages, illustrating how diversity can positively impact the tourism industry’s progress and reputation.

➤ *Research Question 12.*

- *Is there anything else you would like to share about gender perspectives, challenges, and opportunities in tourism?*

According to the responses, the perspectives on gender, the challenges faced, and the opportunities within the tourism industry vary among individuals, reflecting a wide range of experiences and insights. A few informants, such as informants, suggest that individuals within the LGBTQ+ community should act responsibly in public to alleviate negative perceptions and stereotypes. The importance of gender equality and inclusivity was a recurring theme. Informants 2, 3, 8, and 9 emphasized the need for equal opportunities and unbiased treatment regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Informants 4, 5, and 7 reflected on challenges and progress in gender equality. There is still much work to be done, specifically in the tourism industry, and issues such as gender-based discrimination and leadership gaps need to be addressed. The vision for breaking down barriers for a better future was shared by several informants, who advocated for dismantling structural biases and discrimination to move toward a future where equality and acceptance are the norm, as this will benefit both the tourism industry and society. As a result of the study, "Promoting Inclusivity and Equality: Breaking Barriers and Advancing Gender Equality in the Tourism Industry" focuses on proactive change, breaking down systemic barriers, and fostering a safe, respectful, and representative industry. It promotes diversity, equal treatment, and inclusive representation as foundational values for building a more just and dynamic tourism environment.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that gender-related challenges remain prominent within Santiago City’s tourism sector, particularly affecting both LGBTQ+ travelers and workers. Several informants acknowledged persistent issues such as unequal pay, discrimination in hiring and promotions, and public harassment. Many participants shared that LGBTQ+ individuals often face exclusion and verbal abuse, aligning with the work of Monterrubio, et al. (2020) and Ong (2023), who found that LGBTQ+ travelers commonly encounter safety concerns and a lack of inclusive travel environments. Others noted that gender norms often categorize tourism as a “female” profession, discouraging men from entering the field—a view supported by Yang, et al. (2023), who highlighted gendered perceptions limiting roles across tourism sectors.

Personal accounts from informants revealed that gender-based discrimination is experienced in both subtle and overt ways. Several individuals recalled being judged based on appearance, gender expression, or voice tone during job applications, while others reported being misgendered in customer interactions. This supports the findings of Figueroa-Domecq, et al. (2020), who emphasized that LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly transgender travelers, face layered challenges related to both their identity and societal biases. Public harassment was also frequently cited, such as being catcalled, stared at, or labeled with derogatory names while traveling. These accounts reflect cultural limitations in the acceptance of gender diversity, especially in local contexts.

Differences in leadership opportunities between men and women were another recurrent concern. While some workplaces promoted inclusivity in principle, decision-making roles often remained male-dominated. Informants shared stories of qualified female colleagues being overlooked for promotion or being assigned tasks based on perceived physical limitations. These reflect the structural inequalities outlined by Freund, et al. (2021) and Olsson, et al. (2021), who explained that women in tourism face restricted leadership access due to gendered expectations, societal duties, and beauty standards that influence both hiring and advancement.

A significant theme that emerged across interviews was the gendered dimension of safety. Female participants and LGBTQ+ individuals voiced that they often feel unsafe traveling alone, using public restrooms, or interacting with guests and tourists. Several participants described uncomfortable or threatening experiences in rural areas or public spaces where gender norms are less progressive. These risks are compounded for transgender travelers, especially when traveling to regions lacking gender-neutral facilities. These findings align with studies by Wu, et al. (2021), which emphasized the need for protective measures and inclusive design in tourism spaces.

Nevertheless, the study revealed efforts toward inclusivity that have begun to reshape parts of the local tourism sector. Informants noted the implementation of gender sensitivity training, the adoption of inclusive restrooms, and the support of LGBTQ+-friendly events as positive examples of progress. Institutions that engaged in SOGIE awareness campaigns or supported diversity in staff recruitment were praised. These reflect the findings of Domecq & Perez (2020) and Monaco et al. (2024), who highlighted the importance of institutional commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in creating supportive tourism environments.

While challenges persist, there are still growing opportunities for women and LGBTQ+ individuals in tourism, particularly in entrepreneurial roles or international work placements. Informants shared stories of LGBTQ+ business owners thriving in hospitality and service sectors, especially in international locations such as Thailand or Singapore, where inclusivity is more established. George (2021) supports this by emphasizing how LGBTQ+ tourism

contributes economically while promoting representation and self-expression. However, even in these spaces, access to capital and resources remains uneven for marginalized groups.

Tourism businesses and organizations can play a crucial role in fostering inclusivity by institutionalizing fair hiring practices, enforcing anti-discrimination laws, and involving gender-diverse staff in decision-making. Informants recommended routine DEI training, inclusive dress code policies, and leadership programs for underrepresented groups. These practices are supported by Harding and Moser's (2000) Gendered Experiences framework, which stresses the importance of addressing power imbalances within workplace systems to promote gender equity.

Most participants strongly supported the passage of national laws such as the SOGIE Bill and the broader implementation of the Safe Spaces Act, viewing them as vital to ensuring basic protections for gender-diverse individuals. Several also referenced global best practices like the UN Women's Gender Equality Seal as models worth adopting locally. These legal frameworks are echoed in the literature by Prayag et al. (2023) and Menze & Pfalz (2022), who stressed the necessity of policy-backed protection and recognition for LGBTQ+ individuals in tourism contexts.

Advice shared by informants to those facing gender-related barriers included building confidence, seeking inclusive spaces, and connecting with mentors. Many emphasized the importance of being authentic while navigating conservative environments with strategic awareness. These empowerment strategies resonate with the work of Cheng, et al. (2021) and Monterrubio, et al. (2022), who explored how marginalized travelers often use resilience and identity-affirming travel experiences as tools of empowerment and survival.

Respondents also emphasized the essential role of the government in promoting equality, including by passing inclusive legislation, monitoring compliance in tourism businesses, and supporting education on gender sensitivity. They advocated for stronger collaboration between local governments and LGBTQ+ organizations to improve the inclusivity of tourism zones. These recommendations align with Ong's (2023) assertion that state-driven initiatives are foundational to reshaping public and professional attitudes toward gender in tourism.

Gender diversity was widely seen as a valuable asset in tourism, contributing to a richer range of services, perspectives, and customer engagement. Participants shared that inclusive staff teams improved communication, empathy, and creativity, enhancing the guest experience. These benefits are reinforced by Moreno-Alarcón & Cole (2019), who noted that promoting gender inclusivity not only fosters workplace equity but also supports sustainable tourism goals.

Finally, participants expressed the emotional toll of facing gender bias, underscoring the need for continuous awareness-building, community support, and educational

outreach. Their reflections point to the relevance of Crenshaw's Intersectionality Theory, as cited in Samie (2023), which illustrates how overlapping identities—such as being LGBTQ+, economically disadvantaged, or a person of color—create compounded barriers in tourism spaces. These voices highlight the urgency of building systems that recognize and respond to the complex realities of travelers, making tourism more inclusive, safe, and empowering for all.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the lived gendered experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals and other gender groups within the tourism industry, both in local and international contexts. Guided by twelve (12) key interview questions, the research examined how gender influences challenges, safety, inclusion, leadership opportunities, and perceptions within tourism workspaces and travel environments. The responses provided a rich understanding of how deeply gender and identity affect access, safety, recognition, and opportunity. The following conclusion presents the key insights aligned with the thematic focus of each question.

Participants shared that the most common gender-related challenges in tourism are rooted in persistent stereotypes and systemic biases. Tourism work is still perceived mainly through a gendered lens, with specific jobs being labeled as "feminine" or "masculine." These assumptions often restrict both men and women, while LGBTQ+ individuals face additional marginalization through exclusion or invisibility in workplace systems and tourism services. Many respondents personally experienced or witnessed gender-based discrimination, ranging from unequal pay and denied promotions to harassment and verbal abuse. LGBTQ+ individuals shared specific encounters of being misgendered, judged by their physical appearance, or denied respect in both local travel settings and workplace interactions. These experiences demonstrate that despite efforts toward equality, discrimination remains present in many tourism-related environments.

Leadership opportunities in the tourism sector were seen as unequally distributed. Informants observed that while women and LGBTQ+ individuals often excel in service delivery roles, management and decision-making positions remain male-dominated. Barriers such as gender role assumptions, lack of mentorship, and workplace favoritism were reported to hinder upward mobility for diverse gender identities.

Gender-related safety concerns were a recurring theme. Female and LGBTQ+ participants expressed feeling unsafe in specific public settings or during solo travel, particularly in conservative or rural areas. Harassment, lack of protective infrastructure, and cultural taboos about gender diversity were all cited as reasons for avoiding specific destinations or job roles. These issues highlight the importance of creating gender-sensitive and secure tourism environments.

Despite these challenges, several respondents noted efforts toward promoting gender inclusivity within the industry. Initiatives such as gender sensitivity training, the introduction of gender-neutral facilities, and the inclusion of LGBTQ+ voices in branding and events were appreciated. These measures were viewed as small but significant steps toward broader awareness and cultural change in tourism institutions.

Opportunities for career advancement for women and gender-diverse individuals were described as emerging but uneven. While international destinations with progressive policies offer more inclusive working conditions, many local contexts remain bound by traditional expectations. Respondents suggested that entrepreneurship, online tourism platforms, and skills-based programs could serve as accessible pathways for professional growth.

Participants recommended specific strategies to build more inclusive environments, including fair hiring processes, equal opportunity for promotions, visible support for LGBTQ+ employees, and the inclusion of diverse gender voices in Leadership. Such practices were seen not only as ethical imperatives but also as essential to the long-term success and sustainability of tourism businesses.

In terms of policies, informants strongly supported national legislation like the SOGIE Equality Bill and encouraged broader implementation of anti-discrimination and GAD (Gender and Development) programs in tourism. Successful global models were also cited, such as inclusive tourism certification and gender equality frameworks, which could be adapted and scaled within the Philippine tourism sector.

Advice given to individuals facing gender-related barriers in tourism centered on resilience, authenticity, and seeking supportive networks. Many emphasized the importance of self-confidence, standing firm in one's identity, and aligning with inclusive organizations or mentors. These personal strategies were presented as essential tools for navigating exclusion and promoting empowerment.

Respondents highlighted the vital role of government in promoting gender equality through legislation, education, and public support. From implementing workplace protections to funding inclusive programs, the government was seen as a key driver of progress and accountability. Participants believed that tourism cannot be truly inclusive without structural support from national and local institutions.

The benefits of gender diversity in tourism were widely recognized. Respondents agreed that diverse teams bring empathy, creativity, and deeper cultural awareness to tourism services. In customer-facing industries like tourism, inclusive representation is not only beneficial for employee well-being but also enriches guest experiences and business performance.

Finally, participants expressed that addressing gender perspectives in tourism requires recognizing the multiple,

overlapping factors that shape individual experiences. Intersectionality, where gender, class, culture, and identity intersect, plays a significant role in how exclusion or inclusion is felt. The voices of those interviewed underscored that inclusive tourism goes beyond policy; it is about building a culture of respect, safety, and shared opportunity for all, regardless of gender identity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were drawn from the conclusion of the study:

- Promote gender sensitivity and awareness campaigns in the tourism industry to challenge stereotypes and reduce gender-based discrimination. These campaigns should target both tourists and industry workers through seminars, digital media, and community outreach.
- Encourage tourism organizations to adopt and enforce inclusive policies, such as anti-discrimination rules, gender-neutral facilities, and fair hiring practices that support LGBTQ+ individuals and women in Leadership.
- Provide leadership training, mentorship, and entrepreneurial opportunities for women and LGBTQ+ individuals to increase their representation in decision-making roles within the tourism sector.
- Establish clear safety protocols and support systems to address the harassment and to ensure the well-being of all travelers, especially LGBTQ+ individuals and women, in both workplace and travel settings.
- Advocate for the passage and implementation of the SOGIE Bill and other gender-equality legislation that ensures protection from discrimination and promotes equal opportunities in tourism.
- Strengthen collaboration between tourism agencies, local communities, and LGBTQ+ organizations to co-create inclusive tourism experiences and ensure that diverse voices are considered in planning and implementation.
- Integrate gender studies and inclusivity into tourism and hospitality curricula. Offer regular diversity and sensitivity training for employees in the industry.
- Future researchers should incorporate diverse methodologies, including in-depth interviews conducted in various locations, to assess the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals within the tourism industry. This approach will provide them with a richer understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by this community.

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