

Original Scientific Paper

UDC: 338.48-44(210.5)  
005.412:334.722-055.2(460)  
doi: 10.5937/menhottur2302009C

## Has the tide turned? Marine tourism and female empowerment: The case of Galicia

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**Abstract:** Several fishing families on the Spanish coast use marine tourism as a means to complement their finances. The aim of this research is the analysis of this phenomenon characterised by a prominent mood of female empowerment, as a large number of the entrepreneurs and workers in this area are women, and also by its sustainable management, since it is an activity that respects and cares for the environment, while also safeguarding local identities and cultural traditions. The case study is the Galician coast, a pioneer region for this type of tourism. The methodology of analysis is qualitative, involving in-depth interviews with women representing the fishing communities of Redondela, Cambados and Cesantes, as well as the Galician Government's tourism plans. The research contributes to the theory by studying and conceptualising marine tourism as another way to reinforce local identity and sense of belonging. As for its practical implications, it highlights the predominant role of women (who are traditionally invisible in this sector) and the sustainable, bottom-up governance of this form of tourism.

**Keywords:** marine tourism, female empowerment, sustainability, governance, Galicia

**JEL classification:** L86, Q01

## Da li se plima okrenula? Primorski turizam i osnaživanje žena: Slučaj Galicije

**Sažetak:** Nekoliko ribarskih porodica na španskoj obali koriste primorski turizam kao sredstvo za dopunu svojih finansija. Cilj istraživanja je analiza ove pojave koju karakteriše izraženo osnaživanje žena jer veliki broj preduzetnika i radnika u ovoj oblasti čine žene, kao i održivo upravljanje jer se radi o delatnosti koja poštuje i brine o životnoj sredini, a istovremeno čuva lokalni identitet i kulturnu tradiciju. Predmet studije slučaja je obala Galicije, pionirska regija za ovu vrstu turizma. Metodologija istraživanja je kvalitativna i uključuje dubinske intervjuve sa ženama koje predstavljaju ribarske zajednice Redondela, Cambados i Cesantes, kao i turističke planove vlade Galicije. Istraživanje doprinosi teoriji proučavanjem i konceptualizacijom primorskog turizma kao još jednog načina za jačanje lokalnog identiteta i osećaja pripadnosti. Što se tiče njegovih praktičnih implikacija, ono naglašava dominantnu ulogu žena (koje su tradicionalno nevidljive u ovom sektoru) i održivo upravljanje ovim oblikom turizma na principu "odozdo prema gore".

**Ključne reči:** primorski turizam, osnaživanje žena, održivost, upravljanje, Galicija

**JEL klasifikacija:** L86, Q01

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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, the primary sector, and particularly the fishing industry, has suffered a transformation due to its modernization, specialization, mechanization, and the intensification of production, despite the maintenance of the fishermen's association (Allison, 2001; López Losa, 2008). At the same time, also undergoes for a lack of generational replacement and an increasing aging of the fishing community what suggest difficulties for survival of fishermen's families. In this scenario, the diversification of economic activities has emerged as an essential strategy for littoral development and as a means to support and complement these fishermen's families. Marine tourism is in vogue, whereby visitors seek direct contact with the coast and the products generated therein, as well as the opportunity to connect and interact with the producers (Kinseng et al., 2018; Papageorgiou, 2016; Wang & Zhang, 2019). According to Moreno Muñoz (2018), marine tourism is a recently created activity, motivated by the serious financial, social and cultural crisis that the fishing sector has been suffering for decades, in the face of which tourism represents a complementary source of income for its families.

The essence of marine tourism is both the intangible and tangible cultural heritage of fishing communities, as well as local traditions, food and religious festivities. Its main attractions include lighthouses, harbours, fish markets, traditional fishing methods and the peculiar vocabulary of each community.

Italy has led the way in this type of tourism. In the 1980s in Sicily, the *Lega Pesca* cooperative was created, which endeavoured to combine fishing with tourism (Caamaño-Franco, et al., 2020). It was so successful that in 1992, the country produced the first legal definition of fishing tourism, which was modified in 1999 to include boating activities for families with children. This led to the FARO (Flexibility, Adaptability and Reconversion of Fishing Operators) project set up in 2002 and financed by the European Fund, designed to improve qualifications and encourage the start-up of new and more innovative companies in the fishing sector. Its goal was to make positive use of fishing and its workers, to transform and modernise the sector, to offer a profitable, complementary activity to fishing, and to end the inequalities that so often blight the fishing industry. Six regions of Italy (including Sicily), Spain and Portugal were the selected beneficiaries (Pardellas et al., 2011). Other projects, such as ACUIPESCA (2002) and SAGITAL (2004-2008) also sought to reconvert the fishing sector by creating complementary tourist activities that were sustainable, innovative and good for the environment and local workers, albeit with limited success.

In the case of Galicia, marine tourism exists thanks to the major efforts of the different fishing guilds, *Grupos de Acción Local* (Local Action Groups, GALP<sup>\*</sup>), private enterprises and local councils (Moreno Muñoz, 2018). The first project was MAR DE LIRA, created in 2004 by the fishing guild in the town of Lira, which organised different cultural, gastronomic and environmental tourism activities to revitalise, generate exposure for and offer a platform to the fishing industry and its workers (Pena, 2010). Its most prominent activities were, and still are today, fishing workshops that provide visitors with an in-depth picture of coastal life, and even the chance to go out to sea on a fishing boat (so-called fishing tourism). Shortly after came the MARGALAICA brand, which covers the Muros-Noia estuary and a large part of Costa da Morte, which offers fishing tourism, coastal walks, accommodation in seaside

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\* GALP (*Grupos de Acción Local*) are non-profit associations constituted by virtue of Organic Law 1/2002, of March 22, regulating the right to association and applicable law of Spain and the Autonomous Community of Galicia. The following GALP are noted: Mariña-Ortegal, Golfo Ártabro Norte, Costa da Morte, Fisterra-Ría de Muros-Noia, Ría de Arousa, Ría de Pontevedra, Ría de Vigo-A Guarda, Golfo Ártabro Sur.

cottages, traditional local cuisine, and a visit to the fishing museum. The PESCANATUR project brought on board the communities of Cangas, Pontevedra and O Grove, which offer fishing tourism and *ititourism* (fishing, shellfishing and aquaculture activities), always respecting the environment and pursuing sustainability.

It is hypothesised that marine tourism entails a notable mood of female empowerment and leadership, for much of the work, such as shellfish harvesting on foot, is done by women. It is also assumed that marine tourism is a sustainable economic sector with a promising future, despite the current crisis in the fishing sector. Hence, this paper begins with a critical review of the literature and legislation on the sector. Due to its importance for marine tourism, the specific case of Galicia is then analysed, including in-depth interviews with women who work in the industry. The Galician Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and its firm commitment to this type of tourism is also taken into account.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Marine tourism, fishing tourism and ititourism

“Tourism is one of the most important economic sectors worldwide and few environments are more important for tourism and recreation than coastal zones. For many centuries the coast has been a major resource for recreation and the intensity and diversity of activities is continuously growing” (Moreno & Amelung, 2009, p. 1140).

According to Hall (2001), “coastal tourism embraces the full range of tourism, leisure, and recreationally oriented activities that take place in the coastal zone and the offshore coastal waters. These include coastal tourism development (accommodation, restaurants, food industry, and second homes) and the infrastructure supporting coastal development (e.g. retail businesses, marinas, and activity suppliers) (...) Marine tourism (...) includes ocean-based tourism such as deep-sea fishing and yacht cruising” (p. 602). In this sense, academia defines marine tourism as activities that promote traditional fishing culture, making professional fishing compatible with tourist demand (Molina García, 2013; Pardellas & Espejo Marín, 2013; Patiño Romarís, 2016). It is a way to introduce visitors to the fishing world, and does so via the fishermen and women themselves. As Padín Fabeiro and Aboy García (2010) say, marine tourism involves complementary activities to those of maritime professionals, the people who work in fishing, shellfishing and aquaculture activities. Although marine tourism, fishing tourism and ititourism are frequently regarded as synonyms, and do indeed share many similarities, each of them also has its small differences.

The first Spanish law to define marine tourism was Act 11/2008, of December 3, on Fishing in Galicia, approved by the Galician parliament. Said law defined this typology of tourism as “*activities performed by professional groups of the sea, in return for financial compensation, aimed at the valorisation and dissemination of their work in the maritime environment, as well as maritime customs, traditions, heritage and culture.*” On a nationwide level, the first was Act 33/2014 on State Sea Fishing that defined marine tourism as “*activities performed by professional groups of the sea, in return for financial compensation, aimed at the valorisation and dissemination of marine activities and products, as well as maritime customs, traditions, heritage and culture that transcend mere extractive and commercial activity.*”

In the same Act 11/2008, Galicia also became the first region of Spain to define fishing tourism, which it did as “*activities carried out on board fishing vessels by professionals of the sea aimed at informing, valorising and disseminating their work in the marine*

environment.” The national law adds the fact that tourists on board vessels cannot perform fishing activities themselves.

In academia, [Molina García \(2013\)](#) defined fishing tourism as activities carried out by sea fishing professionals whose purpose is to disseminate, valorise and promote the customs and culture of the people who work in the sea fishing industry, whereby third parties other than crew pay money to board the vessel to observe and learn about fishing operations, sailing instruments, coastal routes and the marine environment. Meanwhile, ititourism is defined as activities linked to the fishing sector, with additional hospitality and catering elements such as accommodation in sailors’ houses and tasting menus of fish products, as noted by [Padín Fabeiro and Aboy García \(2010\)](#).

Given the diversity of different authors and propositions, marine tourism is defined as complementary, sustainable activities that disseminate maritime culture, as showcased by seafaring professionals, who receive payment in exchange for developing, promoting and shedding light on the activities inherent to the sector.

## 2.2. Tourism and female empowerment

According to [Gessa and Toledano \(2011\)](#), tourism represents a source of employment and a local development opportunity for the female population, which ultimately leads to their emancipation and empowerment. However, it would be wrong to say that marine tourism is a completely egalitarian field, for the labour conditions are very different between men and women. According to the World Tourism Organization ([UNWTO, 2010](#)), tourism facilitates the presence of women in the industry in three main ways: a) it has a major multiplier effect on employment, few impediments to entry and is more inclined to hire women than other industries; b) it offers business opportunities in people’s own homes, such as producing crafts and foods, among others; and c) it offers part-time and shift work, which is useful for women who have domestic and care responsibilities. Indeed, [Baum \(2013\)](#) claims that tourism produces all kinds of different opportunities for women in the accommodation sector. Similarly, [Rodrigues Soares et al. \(2017\)](#) suggest that tourism is a perfect means to achieve female empowerment. However, the data reveals the main problems that women still have to face, including the salary gap and little or no female presence in the most responsible and senior positions ([Crespi-Vallbona, 2022a](#); [Rodrigues Soares et al., 2017](#)). In the aforesaid [UNWTO \(2010\)](#) report, women were shown to have poorer jobs in terms of pay, conditions and stability. Furthermore, they tend to stereotypically do work related to domestic duties. According to [Huete et al. \(2016\)](#), the most common jobs **in the Spanish tourism industry** for women are as housekeepers, chambermaids, receptionists or travel agents, while men tend to be senior administrators, hotel or travel agency managers and maîtres. Hence, [Cánoves and Villarino \(2000\)](#) claim that the tourism industry is an accurate reflection of the social and economic changes that the sector itself has triggered. However, there is a major gender divide when it comes to jobs, which leads to unequal labour conditions and the lack of visibility of the role of female workers ([Nadel-Klein, 2000](#)).

[Sánchez-Fernández et al. \(2016\)](#) maintain that appointing women to responsible positions is a “*socially responsible action*”, as women have proven to be more highly trained, to better understand and apply diversity and to be more sensitive by nature to social responsibility issues, thus having a very positive impact on company management.

As for marine tourism, [Caamaño-Franco et al. \(2020\)](#) note that in recent years, women have been acquiring a fundamental role in the fishing industry, and now participate in all activities in the sector, from the extraction of resources to their marketing and sale. These authors have found that women play a key role in this particular workforce, mainly due to their high level

of education, experience and family knowledge of the industry. Furthermore, these individual factors (age, gender, education, work experience and role models) motivate a person's decision to start a business (Ashley-Coteleur et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2016; Yukongdi et al., 2017). Although older people are more capable of exhibiting behaviours and means to become an entrepreneur, younger people have more entrepreneurial intentions (Hatak et al., 2015). In general, women have been reported as having lower entrepreneurial intentions (Zhao et al., 2005). Different scholars confirm that advanced educational background and prior labour experience have a positive impact on one's entrepreneurship intention (Shane, 2000; Quan, 2012). Lastly, role modelling refers to learning by examples rather than direct experience, by informal and unintentional observation. In this sense, the exposure to entrepreneurship experience in the family business constitutes important intergenerational influence on entrepreneurship intentions (Carr & Sequeira, 2007), mainly in agricultural and rural development (Alsos et al., 2011).

### **2.3. Sustainability and governance**

Marine tourism is sustainable, has strong future prospects and is respectful of the environment. It is also a financial diversification strategy to help traditional fishing families who have always lived from this sector (Moreno Muñoz et al., 2016). Thanks to the growing service and tourism sectors, both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the fishing industry has been conserved, while local food and fisheries have also become tourism resources (Jiménez de Madariaga & García del Hoyo, 2018). Hence, marine tourism has made a huge contribution to the promotion and valorisation of fishing culture, to the provision of a platform for traditional trades in the sector and, above all, to the preservation of the industry's heritage and identity (Claesson, 2011).

In this sense, Destination Management Organisations (DMO) play a crucial role in this appearance, as they are the institutions in charge of planning, managing and/or marketing tourism destinations. Moreover, they are responsible for involving public and private stakeholders, as well as the local community, in tourism businesses (or programmes) and in decision-making processes (Hall, 2011). This community-based approach to the planning and management of local events or projects reinforces their sustainability and support when community participation and involvement are definitely assured (Crespi-Vallbona, 2022b). Then, it is also meaningless without the work done by administrations, tourism companies (either indirectly or directly with marine tourism) or the guilds and GALPs that drive actions to improve the situation of the fishing industry and make this tourism activity sustainable (Pardellas et al., 2011). For Chen (2010), these local entities are created for the purpose of improving the conditions and quality of life of the interested parties, as well as to diversify the local economy of areas dependent on the fishing industry. Furthermore, as Nadel-Klein (2000) propose, marine tourism is nothing without the presence of its female workers, called "guardianas", who are in charge of preserving the fishing culture. Ultimately, marine tourism helps to ameliorate the financial conditions of fishing families, and also to preserve the environment and the resources of the sector (Jiménez de Madariaga & García del Hoyo, 2018).

### **3. Methodology and objectives**

The base hypothesis is that, in the fishing sector, and more specifically in marine tourism, there is a notable feeling of female empowerment and leadership, due to the fact that most jobs in this type of tourism are filled by women, such as shellfish harvesting on foot. Marine tourism is also considered a sustainable economic sector with a promising future, despite the crisis in which the fishing sector is immersed. Due to its relevance in the sector, the case

study is Galicia, and consists of in-depth interviews with women who work in this kind of tourism (Table 1). This primary data is analysed qualitatively, using the snowball technique, whereby the interviewees themselves contacted other women in the same field in order to achieve a higher number of responses. According to the Xunta de Galicia, there are more than 30 organizations which provide tourism marine activities, but only one-third of them are run by women (sharing this responsibility with their husbands or partners), mainly shellfish harvesters.

Practically 99% of the women interviewed are shellfish harvesters. 80% of them completed higher education, showing that they are well educated (Caamaño-Franco et al., 2020). However, only 10% studied tourism, because they come from traditional fishing families and are currently working in tourism as a complement to keep the main business going and support their homes. The interviews were held online in May 2022, and their contents were transcribed and analysed according to the core issues of this research.

Quantitative methodology is dominant in the field of tourism and creates some limitations that qualitative research can avoid as it can provide a more comprehensive outlook of the antecedents, determinants that trigger entrepreneurial, and empowerment behaviour among women in the fishing sector.

Table 1: Characteristics of the female interviewees

	<b>Job</b>	<b>Business group</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>I1</b>	Shellfish harvester	AMARTURMAR	>55	Redondela
<b>I2</b>	Shellfish harvester	GUIMATUR	>50	Cambados
<b>I3</b>	Shellfish harvester/ <i>politiqueira</i>	AMARTURMAR	>40	Cesantes
<b>I4</b>	Sailor/Shellfish harvester	Private company	>35	Redondela

Source: Authors' research

The secondary data comes from TURGALICIA, the region's main tourism institution, which treats marine tourism as a specific product that it defines as a new one that *unites the authenticity and uniqueness of Galicia's maritime culture with a large amount of rural accommodation where the client can rest after a hard day of fishing or sailing*. Data was also taken from the Spanish Statistical Institute (INE), European Commission, *Instituto Social de la Marina* (Social Marine Institute, ISM) and the *Red Española de Mujeres en el Sector Pesquero* (Spanish Network of Women in the Fishing Sector, REMSP) to contrast the proposed hypotheses.

## 4. Results and discussion

In coastal areas where fishing is a form of subsistence, women do important work to foster economic diversification through the sale of crafts and local products, as well as other activities related to marine tourism. The first hypothesis proposed herein is that **there is a notable feeling of female empowerment and leadership in marine tourism**, because a good part of the jobs are filled by women, such as shellfish harvesting on foot. According to the report on *The Role of Women in Fisheries*, the female presence in this sector is low (43%), with just 1% of women working in extractive fishing, while 44% work in aquaculture and 75% do processing activities. As for management and administration, 37% of the positions of greater responsibility are filled by women.

According to INE (2023) data, 60% of workers in the Galician tourism industry are female, but in the most senior positions of responsibility, they are practically inexistent. Rodrigues Soares (2017) also finds that men hold the vast majority of managerial positions to the clear

detriment of women, who only have a prominent presence in Galician Tourism Agencies, where they make up 60% of the total, and the Galician Tourist Board, where 30% of senior jobs are served by women. In the private sector, men also dominate top management. Only two of the leading hotel chains in Galicia have female directors, namely Hotusa and Eurostars, with men predominating in all the others. It is also confirmed that women only get 70% of the salary that men earn.

As for the presence of women in the fishing sector and marine tourism, almost 99% of senior positions are held by men, especially in guilds, although almost half of the workers are women, bordering on 100% in the case of shellfish harvesters. According to data from the ISM, more than 16% of the 10,970 affiliates to the *Régimen Especial de la Seguridad Social del Mar* (Special Social Security Regime of the Sea, REM) are women. This percentage rises to 35% if women who work in processing, aquaculture and sales are taken into account. This female presence is analysed in greater detail below by the different sub-sectors and jobs.

Extractive fishing is fishing in the purest sense. In Spain, of the total number of 53,849 people working in this field, just 269 are women. With a mere 5% of the total, they are clearly under-represented in this sub-sector.

*“... the guys from the association are in charge of boat and txoco fishing trips, so we women offer tours and other activities, because none of us are professionals in that field (boat trips)” (I2).*

Shellfish harvesting, the most common job in the fishing sector, involves the collection, breeding or catching of shellfish. There are two main types of shellfishing, by boat and on foot. The former is typically done by men, the latter by women.

*“... there are two very different kinds of fishing. While on foot it was traditionally for women, boat fishing is for men. On foot is inclusive, there are no distinctions and newcomers are welcomed indiscriminately. Boats are different, fewer women go in for that because the bosses make it hard to hire women” (I1).*

Shellfishing on foot is viewed as a complementary economic activity, and not as important as extractive fishing or aquaculture. It is also an easy way for women to bring home some extra cash. Hence most people who harvest shellfish on foot, more than 60% of the total, are women (Europa Azul, 2019).

*“... shellfisherwomen like us clear the seaweed from the beaches where we go so that tourists can enjoy the sea. If we didn't do that, the beaches wouldn't be clean enough to put towels on nor would they look very appealing. Because of green issues, it has to be done very carefully so as not to destroy the environment (...) The number of kilos we catch is negotiated with the government so as not to completely eliminate the resource, even if that means smaller catches and earning less, because otherwise it would disappear. We have to be very careful when collecting the resource because it could disappear from one day to the next” (I2).*

As I2 says, shellfishing requires extreme knowledge of the activity and its environment, especially about the biological characteristics of the shellfish they catch. Care for and survival of resources thus depends on these shellfish harvesters, whose environmental awareness and wisdom is an important factor. And this knowledge has been passed down through generations. This confirms that a large experience in the family and role models play an important influence on the continuity of a traditional fishing activity/business.

Aquaculture consists of the cultivation of aquatic plant and animal species. In this sub-sector, there is more of a gender balance. In 2004, women made up 44% of the total and men 56% (European Commission, 2006). However, despite the notable female presence in aquaculture, specific jobs are still divided by sex, with men doing the more physically demanding work

while women, among other tasks, are responsible for selling the goods.

The main processing industries in the fishing sector are fish salting and hermetic canning. Far more than half of the workers in this sub-sector are women, 20,250 as opposed to 6,750 men (European Commission, 2006). However, they tend to be temporary workers (during fishing seasons), with lower wages than men, and a low level of education because of the limited interest in training people for casual support work.

The fish market has always been the main place for exchanging products, where the previous morning's catches are bought and sold. Traditionally, it has been women who have done the selling, as their husbands, fathers or brothers would go out to fish at night and the women would finish the job by selling what they had caught. This separation of responsibilities is a further cause of the limited female presence in decision-making and in the most senior jobs, because it was highly uncommon for women to be in charge of boats. Fortunately, this situation changed when the crisis hit the sector because the men went out to sea far less frequently, and many of them were forced to change their work or combine it with other jobs, and many women stepped aside so that men could work in the fish market to keep the family tradition alive. Nowadays, the numbers of male and female fishmongers have equalled out.

The netmaking trade has always been focused on women. The main duty is to assemble the nets that sailors then take out to sea. Netmakers start out very young, guided by their families, and especially their mothers, who had been taught the trade the same when they were young. Again, role models play an important influence on the continuity of a traditional fishing activity/business. Hence, it is another trade that is passed down the generations. Many of these women have their own workshops and others work for associations. According to REM estimates, more than half a million women work as netmakers, most of them in Galicia, the Basque Country, Asturias and Cantabria. Their main problem is unqualified labour, which, according to the *Federación de Redeiras Artesáns de Galicia* (Galician Federation of Artisan Netmakers) is in excess of 65%. This has led these women to form different associations to demand greater care, security and respect for their professions since they feel that they are not receiving the consideration they deserve. I2 supports this when she says: *"... we ask you to please put the focus on us. We are here and we contribute like any other job. We want them to listen to us, help us and be able to work to give back to the sea everything that it has given to us."*

As can be seen, women have always played a major role in the fishing sector, but this presence has only recently begun to be appreciated. And this is due to the marine tourism projects that sea workers have promoted, as is the case of the AMARTURMAR and GUIMATUR marine tourism associations. Fishing tourism is a recent creation and the person who runs the only company in operation is a man, accompanied by his wife. He does the fishing and his wife supports him with such typical jobs as shellfish harvesting, selling seafood and tour guiding.

*"... fishing-tourism as such doesn't exist in Galicia, we do marine tourism, which is different. Fishing tourism is about going out to sea with a fisherman and coming back with the catch. It might be 8 hours, at night, whatever. In Galicia there are very few people and most are men. There are married couples and brothers and sisters who do it, but very, very few. And women, I tell you, there are fewer" (I2).*

Several authors (Alario & Morales, 2016; Gessa & Toledano, 2011) class this female empowerment as *"sustainopreneurship"*, as the management of activities and associations is based, as I1 maintains, on the preservation of the nature and cultural heritage of the sea. Indeed, she defines herself as a *"guardian of the sea"*. *The few women who run their own*



*businesses say they have not had to put up with any criticism for having entered the fishing world, but they do recognise their limited presence in the most responsible positions. As E1 says: “... most workers are women, especially in shellfishing on foot, but the leaders and the ones who make the big decisions in the different guilds are men, who are a much smaller percentage of the total number of workers... Most of the guild members are women, but we have no say, no visibility, no importance. Men have the power and that’s not right when most of us are women. We don’t feel represented in the governing bodies, despite being the most numerous sector, we’re not part of the decision-making. For me there is no equality or fair balance when it comes to deciding (...) In shellfishing on foot, 99% of us are women and at the moment there are only six men.”*

Marine tourism is proving to be an alternative for the fishing sector. The GALP local action groups have a lot to do with that. Of the 290 companies in the maritime industry, 121 are involved in tourism and are linked, directly or indirectly, with the cultural heritage of the sea and its tangible and intangible elements, where 40% of workers are women. Most of these projects are run by men or by women together with their spouses (Caamaño-Franco et al., 2020; Gessa & Toledano, 2011).

In short, although the female presence in the fishing sector is a relevant one, in some sectors, such as extractive fishing, it is almost invisible. Meanwhile, the proposed hypothesis **regarding the mood of female empowerment is rejected** for although a high number of women work in **marine tourism**, it is **not a place where women feel empowered**. Maybe, as they say themselves, this is because of the age and mentality of the interviewees. Once again the level of formal education establishes a before and after in terms of gender equality.

*“... I think in order for that feeling of empowerment to exist there first has to be a feeling of inferiority or oppression. In my case, I’ve never had that feeling. I’ve never felt the need to prove anything... I don’t think we feel special for having done this as women” (I1).*

*“... women all join the Marine Tourism association with the idea of being big, visible and getting noticed. We don’t think that mood has spread across the whole sector, because otherwise we’d all be in the association, and we’re not... As for feminist policies, we’re a bit tired of everything just being all talk and no action. We need practice. People are attending fewer and fewer of these things because we don’t think it’s treated seriously enough (...). Most of the workers are older women with a different mentality who know what they have to do and don’t want it to change” (I2).*

*“... (the feeling of empowerment) is starting to emerge, not in all women, as 60% are over 55 years old and are worried about other things” (I3).*

**Although no particular female empowerment is noted in marine tourism, improvements are observed for combining work and family**, as confirmed by the interviewees, as a form of economic subsistence and household budget collaboration.

*“Of course they can be combined, much more than with any other job. I’m the best example. I never miss my children’s birthdays, or shows and workshops at school, or anything that I should experience as a mother (...) sea and shellfishing hours are flexible (...) the most important thing is to be with my son, I choose that. You don’t have it so easy and flexible in other jobs” (I2).*

*“I’m from a seafaring family (...), but it was being able to reconcile my work life with my family life that introduced me to the sea, because with two babies, and after the company I worked for closed, I needed to spend time with my little ones and to work at the same time” (I3).*

The second hypothesis considers that **marine tourism is a financially sustainable sector**

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**with future potential.** E2 maintains that “... *the association’s main target is to raise the exposure of our professions because we believe that we are indebted to the sea. I’m eternally grateful to the sea for giving me the opportunity to be there throughout my kids’ childhood and lives. I feel indebted and I want to give back to the sea all the good things it has given to me (...) we want to be heard and to be respected like any other profession*”.

It is therefore important that local development in fishing areas is governed by GALPs and fishing guilds, which produce integrated, participatory strategies based on the particularities of each area. Both the fishing guilds and GALPs are responsible for promoting marine tourism. According to [Felicidades García and Piñeiro Antelo \(2017\)](#), GALPs adopt a plural, inclusive governance system, taking a bottom-up approach where every opinion counts, and with the particular goal of making women more visible ([REMSP, 2017](#)). Galicia has eight GALPs, more than any other region of Spain and operating with the biggest budgets in 2020. In short, marine tourism is sustainable in terms of the ‘triple bottom line’ of social, environmental and economic development. This is also corroborated by the interviewees, who agree that marine tourism is a sustainable activity. The AMARTURMAR association even has a marine biologist who issues constant reports on the status of resources, the amount of each species that can be caught and their state of health.

“... *without sustainability our seas would have no resources. So, we are the guardians of those resources, basically that’s our job. When it comes to exposure of our profession, marine tourism helps our visitors respect the environment and learn things that they didn’t know about respecting and helping to take care of the different resources (species) that we catch*” (I3).

“... *(sustainability) is our way of life. We show people the importance of recycling, the signs of climate change, which are already evident in the sea, and traditional and artisanal fishing as a sustainable form of exploitation. For us they are ways to ensure hope for the future*” (I1).

“...*We make the resource sustainable because we clear away its predators, we take care of the flora and fauna. We care about the resource. Who else apart from us is interested in making the activity sustainable and caring for the environment? (...) That there are no spills, leaks, poaching, etc. We do that and it isn’t appreciated, but that’s the way it is. Our enclave is in a Natura 2000 network and that’s a job and a value that must be made visible. We women have had something to do with achieving that (...) Looking after the resource is part of our job and climate change isn’t helping the resource to survive. We monitor, control and track the resource and we have a biologist in the guild who does analyses for us and gives us support. We keep a close eye on everything*” (I3).

As the interviewees comment, two of the main problems in the fishing sector are unqualified labour and climate change, which put the future of their profession in danger and therefore their way of life and family livelihood. So, they are not too optimistic about the future of the industry. All four of them agree that unless something gets done soon and, above all, if they do not get decent labour conditions, their professions will end up disappearing. As E2 says, “*nobody wants a job that doesn’t give them a decent wage to take home... (The future) depends on now. It looks very dim to me. Unless we do something, we’re doomed to disappear. We are at a point of no return. We need to get our act together now. We want to take the situation to Parliament, to the Ministry, to Europe. We want exposure, because if a solution can be found, the sea is a sector that could still provide a life and work for a lot of people. If it’s worked until now, why can’t it continue?*”

*“It does have a future if you really love the work you do. The only thing is that it can’t be your main activity, at least in our case, it’s another complement to our activity, because we don’t get a decent salary that’s attractive to anyone” (I3).*

*“I think it has a future, if it gets visibility and if the public administrations help us, because the sea is beautiful and people don’t know about it. I hope the fishing sector in general doesn’t disappear... It’s something that worries me a lot and that’s why we’re calling for help and, most of all, for us to be given the respect that we deserve. It’s time” (I4).*

As a sign of hope, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has prepared a Draft Law on Sustainable Fishing and Fisheries Research whose objectives are the control of poaching, the digitalisation and use of new technologies, to make the sector more economically, socially and environmentally sustainable through the conservation of fishing resources, employment and social cohesion, as well as focusing on the optimal management of tourism resources, and especially on the environmental impact that the use of such resources can cause. As has been shown, the fishing sector is driven by families with a fishing tradition and so a key factor for the future of the sector is to encourage the next generation, also with the promotion of marine tourism. However, the interviewees are unsure about this. They claim that the fishing sector is an unattractive one because people cannot make a living from it, there are no decent wages and it is not appreciated or recognised, meaning that young people do not want to work in the profession. So, rather than following the family tradition, they look to other professions instead.

*“(Future) There is none because if people are looking for work they don’t think the sea offers a decent wage to live off, they don’t come here to work. They don’t even contemplate it as a possibility (...) And there are increasingly fewer resources and you earn less, the sector is less attractive. At the end of the day, the people working here are the ones who don’t fit in anywhere or find it hard to find another kind of work, and that’s fine, but we want people who want to work in the sea and who want to earn a bit of cash” (I2).*

*“My children had no intention of working in the sea, no chance, because they’ve seen me come home from work with nothing. It isn’t stable. Who’d want to work in something like that? This kind of work and the sector need to be made more dignified and more profitable through proper management, because we contribute to culture and tradition ... There needs to be motivation to work for a salary, and not for peanuts like has happened and is happening” (I2).*

*“That’s difficult because of the times we’re in, it’s a build-up of pollution, climate change, administrative decadence... all that affects the health of our estuaries and of course young people’s interest in continuing these jobs. It looks very bleak to me” (I3).*

*“I think the only people working in the sea these days are the ones that need to, or who love the maritime way of life, because the labour conditions aren’t attractive at all and young people don’t want to do something that doesn’t feel like dignified work. It’s something that has to change urgently (...) If the labour conditions improve, I’m sure young people in our area will want to work in the sea instead of having to emigrate to other countries far from their families, because we are very much family people in Galicia” (I4).*

Consequently, this research indicates that despite a family business and parental role model having a role to play in enhancing the development of entrepreneurship among family members, children show a low level of entrepreneurial intention and willingness to go on with family background.

As is also maintained by [Hernández-Aguado \(2013\)](#), traditional fishing could be the future for the fishing sector because that system involves treating fish populations as public assets

that should therefore be exploited in a responsible manner to ensure their sustainability and respect for the environment. This is in keeping with the definition of marine tourism as an activity that takes into account the environment and the health of sea resources. The conclusion could thus be reached that **marine tourism** could be the salvation of the fishing sector or, at least, **could help to make this industry more visible and prevent it from disappearing**.

*“I hope it has a good future. But right now I think it’s undervalued. It seems like an interesting way to spend your holidays, and at the same complements the income of a primary sector that’s suffering in so many ways (...) this kind of tourism could show the population the social and ecological benefits of traditional trades, at the same time offering new work opportunities to new generations of seafarers, hoteliers and workers in the tourism industry in general, leading to new businesses and new ways of getting people closer to the sea and vice versa ... Tourism helps to get us known and we are very grateful to the people doing our activities. Thanks to them we’re becoming a bit more visible” (I1).*

*“Marine tourism is starting to give us a say and might be our salvation because a lot of people prefer tourism over other professions because there can be money to be made and it’s a nice line of work, where you learn stuff every day about culture, languages, etc. We just want to be appreciated and heard, and guided tours might be starting to do that for us, but there is still a lot, an awful lot, left to be done” (I2).*

*“Well, I hope not. That would mean no more sailors. Then our seas would have no resources, we are the guardians of those resources, that’s basically our job (...). But it shouldn’t be the solution, or otherwise the focus would be on the economy and not on the preservation of our trade and getting us heard” (I3).*

*“As I was saying earlier, I hope it isn’t (the salvation of the sector) because if it is, we’ll end up like what has happened to sun and sea tourism, completely depending on tourists, and that’s not good if something happens like we had with Covid-19. I hope it will be a help, because marine tourism is a very nice, unique activity that everyone should experience, but it can’t be our salvation because we are much more than that” (I4).*

In short, and as has been shown, female workers in the sector are not very hopeful about the future of their professions and are calling for actions to preserve both the resources and their jobs. However, based on the (scarce) research analysed and the government’s move to create a Draft Act on Sustainable Fishing and Fishery Research, there is room for some hope for the future of the sector, or at least for its survival thanks to marine tourism. As we have seen, these tourism activities are giving workers in the sector more of a say and exposure, although there is a lot of work still to be done. As noted by [Abrahamsson \(2008\)](#), women are characterised by bottom-up entrepreneurship, that is to say in governance and cooperation with the agents involved in the sector (institutions, small and medium enterprises, associations, guilds, etc.) that will guarantee the survival of the activity. In this sense, the Xunta de Galicia and its DMO, has a key role in establishing links and collaborations with the fishing community and private businesses, reinforcing marine tourism and sustainable governance, as it happens in other tourism contexts.

## 5. Conclusions

Marine tourism has no **uniform definition** that differentiates the different concepts that it entails, such as fishing tourism and itourism. The different Autonomous Communities of Spain that feature this tourism activity have different laws that imply certain things or others, and neither has academia unified the definition. Therefore, considering the analysed laws and research, marine tourism is defined as *“complementary and sustainable activities that*

*promote maritime culture, valorised by professionals of the sea, who receive payment in return for developing them, giving value, exposure and a say to the inherent activities of the sector”.*

Regarding the **hypotheses**, the first on the mood of female empowerment and leadership in the sector **is refuted**, as the interviewed women do not feel that they are doing anything special simply by being women. Although there are female entrepreneurs, only 20% of tourism businesses in Galicia are managed by women, and in many of these, they share the responsibility with their husbands. There is therefore no corroboration that there is a feeling of female empowerment in marine tourism, something which needs to change given that most of the workers are women. Neither do women have many positions of responsibility. Considering that women are as educated or better educated than men and should be a highly attractive asset for companies due to their greater capacity for sensitisation and innovation, businesses are urged to be socially responsible and to put the focus on a female presence in order to thus ensure that women get the same pay, responsibilities and exposure as men. In this sense, this research confirms the lack of presence of women in management positions at fishing companies and associations, despite their constant involvement in family businesses as a contribution to household income. Their usual job position has to do with netmaking and shellfishing. Hence, this research confirms that a large experience in the family and role models play an important influence on the continuity of a traditional fishing activity/business, even on the entrepreneurship intentions as it is considered by other scholars (Alsos et al., 2011; Carr & Sequeira, 2007) but in other economic sectors.

The **second hypothesis is partly confirmed** as **marine tourism is sustainable** because it respects the environment and cares about the health of resources before exploiting them. This is corroborated by the female interviewees, the different local action groups and the guilds. However, marine tourism **does not have a clear future** as the culture and professions of the sea are undervalued and in crisis. There is a need for **cooperation** between public and private administrations to make the professions of the sea more visible and treated more seriously, and also to improve the labour conditions and pay of each profession to make work in the sea as attractive as other jobs and thus attract young, talented people that specialise in the marine sector and will help to make this industry profitable, attractive and sustainable. It is the same situation as that of another primary sector, namely that of agriculture in Catalonia, which also has a highly uncertain future (Crespi-Vallbona & Plana-Farran, 2022; Noguer-Juncà et al., 2021).

Regarding managerial implications, it is worth highlighting that DMO is commonly perceived as key stakeholder in the key tasks of event planning, implementation, promotion and management. In the specific case of marine tourism, policy-makers should implement a visitor data system that will allow gathering of information that will enhance tourism activities and eventually visitors' satisfaction. Moreover, network of different businesses should be established with an aim to offer additional experiences to tourists and battle seasonality. Thus, involving local community in the design of these experiences would be seen as necessity. Lastly, it is suggested a specific education program addressed to young people which combines the art of sustainable fishing with marine tourism opportunities to ensure the continuity of this primary sector.

This research is focused on the Galicia context, which may limit the extent of the conclusions and limits conclusions. Hence, it would be interesting to conduct a comprehensive analysis of marine tourism and female empowerment and entrepreneurship intention in other Spanish regions in order to generalize the findings. The limitation of the study also comes as a result of case study approach, as it has been perceived as descriptive (storytelling) rather than critical (analytical). However, it is possible to overcome these

issues by using theory from the start rather than producing theory based on the study findings. Furthermore, we may have a positive perspective on marine tourism and female empowerment, and this bias could influence the results and the discussions. Recommendations for future research may be initiated in the direction of further acknowledging the role of the women within the fishing community and its contribution to the community economy, and depicting the marine tourists' motivations.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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