Gender and work in rural tourism: Exploring stereotypes and women's emotions

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Sincerely,
The Editors of *Tourism Geographies*

Gender and work in rural tourism: Exploring stereotypes and women's emotions

The study of emotions and their role in ordering social life has been a fruitful feminist contribution to cultural and social studies. Since the 2000s, tourism researchers have turned their attention to emotions, however in particular niches, such as rural tourism, there is limited exploration of the intersection of emotions and gender stereotypes. To address this gap, we rely on Ahmed's framework on emotions as a powerful tool to investigate gender roles, stereotypes and tourism productive and spatial relations in rural contexts. The analysis also draws from the theoretical contributions on socio-cultural spaces, embodied emotions, affective practices and gendered work in the subfields of feminist geography and gender and tourism scholarship. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, from 2015 to 2018, with 49 Mexican women and analysed through qualitative content analysis, using inductive and deductive approaches. In addition, non-participant observation, document review, and field notes enriched and complemented the interview data. The findings highlight how emotions mediate women's lived experiences of gendered rural tourism work. Affective or emotional responses illustrate women's strategies to cope with or resist productive and spatial limitations produced by traditional gender roles and stereotypes. The potential of emotional responses to contest social norms has proved useful for some women to open new paths to surpass their relatively weaker positions in rural societies. Concluding thoughts focus on the contradictory messages experienced by women and tensions generated in both the family and the community. As a result, women's emotions are used as a tool to negotiate inequalities. We also highlight the importance of gender mainstreaming strategies to contest traditional gender roles in rural tourism contexts.

Keywords: rural tourism, tourism work, gender stereotypes, women's emotions, Mexico, Latin America.

Introduction

The "emotional turn" in human geography has highlighted the importance of emotions

in the ways individuals experience and interpret the world in their quotidian lives

(Bondi et al., 2007). Although some scholars have examined how tourism development

contributes to shape the gendered and ethnic identities of Latin American women with

some links to their emotions (Baab, 2012; Little, 2008; Wilson & Ypeij, 2012); an

explicit analysis of the affective dimensions of tourism processes is lacking. Following

recent calls to acknowledge the role of emotions in embodied tourism encounters and in

tourism work (e.g. Buda et al., 2014; Hall, 2018; Picard, 2012; Tucker 2007, 2009;

Veijola, 2009), we seek to conduct an examination of women's emotions towards

gendered work in rural tourism contexts and the implications of gender stereotypes in

generating spatial divisions. The contribution of this study is to examine emotions as a

form of cultural politics or world making (Ahmed 2014), through which the affective

practises of women may challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes or inhabit

social norms differently to overcome productive and spatial restrictions in a specific

sociocultural context (rural tourism in Mexico).

Rural tourism is a growing and changing sub-sector of travel and tourism,

closely related to natural, social and community values, as well as to rusticity and

authenticity (Hernández et al., 2005; Little, 2008; Pérez-Ramírez et al., 2012; Sandoval-

Quintero et al., 2017). Mexican scholars have highlighted rural women's incorporation

as a result of public policy strategy to foster social change (Hernández et al., 2005;

Pérez-Ramírez et al., 2012; Rodríguez & Acevedo, 2015), while promoting the

conservation of natural resources (Martínez Corona, 2003; Soarez et al., 2005; Suárez-

Gutiérrez et al., 2016).[1]

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[1] According to official data, 93.5% of rural women in Mexico lack access to education, health,
other social services, adequate facilities and obtain 25% less income than rural men

Similar to other regions of the world, rural tourism in Mexico is heavily grounded on the rural idyll, with traditional social norms playing an important role in attracting tourists (Jiménez-Esquinas, 2017; Baylina et al., 2016; Browne, 2011; Little & Austin, 1996; Serra & Ferré, 2006). A tension emerges between the work opportunities that rural tourism provides to local women and the gendered roles that women are expected to perform, as well as the spaces where they perform this work (i.e. often domestic spaces versus public tourism spaces).. Scholars have examined the ways in which rural tourism can contribute to produce changes in gender norms mainly by generating work opportunities for women (Lenao & Basupi, 2016; Smritee & Brijesh, 2017). However, the literature has also shown that the economic changes produced by tourism development are not always accompanied by broader socio-cultural transformations (Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2016; Tran & Walter, 2014; Vizcaino-Suárez, 2018). Due to these tensions, even though rural women tend to appreciate the positive aspects of tourism work, the nature of such work and the prevalent gender expectations and stereotypes generate emotions with different outcomes at the individual and the social level (Ratten & Dana, 2017; Tran & Walter, 2014; Tucker, 2007). In line with tourism geographers and sociologists, who have called to acknowledge feelings and emotions in tourism research (see Cohen & Cohen, 2019; Picard, 2012), this paper conducts a qualitative examination of women's affective responses to traditional gender roles and stereotypes in rural tourism work, and to broader productive and spatial restrictions.

As Latin American scholars conducting research in Mexico, we are interested in analyzing women's participation in tourism production from a gender perspective. To

(CONEVAL, 2017). Rural women also bare the responsibility for family care and well-being. Rural societies uphold deeply rooted values in Mexico and gender inequalities persist in both mestizo and indigenous societies (INMUJERES, 2017; Vásquez-García & Vargas-Vásquez, 2018).

problematize the affective practises embodied by women working in rural tourism, we

pay close attention to the challenges and opportunities they face. Thus, two significant

questions guide the present study: a) what are the implications of traditional gender

roles and stereotypes for (Mexican) women who work in rural tourism? And given that

emotions move us (Ahmed, 2014; Anderson, 2009; Bondi et al., 2007), b) what are

women's emotional responses to gender stereotypes and broader productive and spatial

restrictions? We seek to examine these questions through a qualitative study based on

semi-structured interviews with 49 Mexican women who work in rural tourism. The

aims of this paper are two-fold: first, it seeks to contribute to the literature on gender,

emotions and tourism work, through an examination of traditional gender roles and

stereotypes in rural tourism and the exploration of women's emotional responses to

gendered work and spatial restrictions. Second, the paper advances a framework that

seeks to improve women's participation, based on the lived experiences of Mexican

women.

Literature Review

Feminist understandings of emotions

Feminist theory has significantly contributed to social studies through the recognition of

experience and subjectivity in the examination of gender issues, paying particular

attention to the role of emotions in cultural values and beliefs, and in the construction of

social relations and hierarchies (Dilley & Scraton, 2010; Waitt & Clifton, 2013;

Wetherell, 2015; Wilson & Ypeij, 2012). In line with the transdisciplinary "affective

turn" in cultural and social studies, recent feminist scholarship on emotions has focused

on exploring the critical links between affect, emotion and power relations based on

gender, sexuality, race and class (e.g. Ahmed, 2014; Cvetkovich, 2003; Hemmings,

2005; Ngai, 2005; Waitt & Clifton, 2013; Wetherell, 2015). Similarly, feminist

geographers have produced a body of work that looks at the impacts of emotions in the

gendered socio-spatial spheres (Bondi et al., 2007; Browne, 2011). A common aspect of

these studies is the examination of how emotions are negotiated in the public sphere

(including the workplace), while being experienced through the body (Browne, 2011;

Gorton, 2007). Feminist scholarship has also shed light on the social control of

emotions (Lutz, 1996), while advancing the conceptualisation of emotions as a site of

resistance to gendered norms that generate geographies of inequality and exclusion

(Bondi et al., 2007; Browne, 2011; Hall, 2018; Waitt & Clifton, 2013; Wilson & Little,

2008).

Ahmed's (2014) work is particularly relevant for our analysis. The author adopts

a multidisciplinary approach, drawing heavily from sociocultural theories rather than

advancing a psychological explanation, to understand the way emotions interrelate with

notions of culture and power. She focuses on how emotions shape people's affective

practices in their quotidian life (Wetherell, 2015). In Ahmed's view, "[e]motions shape

the very surfaces of bodies, which take shape through the repetition of actions over

time, as well as through orientations towards and away from others" (2014, p.4). In this

sense, emotions create boundaries between the inside and the outside, and contribute to

establish differences amidst the individual and the social. Emotions move subjects and

can "stick" them together, but they always involve particular readings of the world one

inhabits (Ahmed, 2004, 2014). Thus, emotions, such as anger, fear, shame, joy or hope,

can be construed as a form of cultural politics or world making, which interweaves the

personal and the public. For example, anger can be a response to the pain produced by

violence or to the injustice of racism, but it can also involve creativity and the capacity

to imagine a different world (Ahmed, 2009). Fear can be structural and mediated as

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opposed to an immediate bodily response to danger (Ahmed, 2003; Wilson & Little,

2008). The feeling of shame, embarrassment or guilt may emerge from the experience

of dispossession or degradation and involves the reshaping of bodily and social spaces;

while hope can be a decisive element to bring about social change (Ahmed, 2014).

Gender and the affective practices in tourism

In concordance with some of Ahmed's theoretical proposals, feminist geographers have

drawn attention to the impact of gender norms and stereotypes on women's affective

practices and the complex and often unequal ways in which socio-cultural spaces are

produced, interpreted and experienced (e.g. Bondi et al., 2007; Hopkins, 2009; Sharp,

2009). These "emotional geographies" have contributed to opening new interpretations

in the study of gender and emotions in tourism (see Cohen & Cohen, 2019;

d'Hauteserre, 2015; Frazer & Waitt, 2016; Hall, 2018; Moyle et al., 2019; Picard, 2012;

Tucker, 2009, 2016; Wilson & Little, 2008).   For example, drawing from Ahmed's

work on emotions, Buda et al. (2014) examined the notion of embodied emotionality or

how emotions play a crucial role in the ways in which touring bodies interact with other

subjects (i.e. hosts) and places in the context of dark tourism. By examining the

embodied feelings and emotions of tourists and tourist guides, the authors shed light on

how tourist experiences are socially constructed and shaped by prevailing social values.

We use a similar premise in this paper when examining the rural idyll and women's

affective practices.

Another recent work that draws from Ahmed's framework is Frazer and Waitt's

(2016) on the sensual–emotional–affectual dimensions of volunteering. The authors

conceptualise the pain experienced by volunteer tourists: "as a distancing response that

not only creates social and spatial borders between 'selves' and 'others', but also

assigns meaning through the act" (p. 180). Through pain, volunteer tourists either repeat

asymmetrical power relations or evoke an affective ethics of hope overcoming dominant

power structures. The analysis highlights the ambivalence of emotions and their

importance in the study of relational and spatial practices in tourism.

As illustrated in the previous examples, tourism scholarship has looked at the

intertwined connections of affects (emotions and feelings) in tourism experiences and

encounters, without necessarily distinguishing the gendered dimensions of affects.

However, some gender and tourism scholars have sought to address this gap. Within the

scholarship of women's experiences in tourism production, the work of Tucker (2007,

2009) has paid particular attention to the role of emotions. In her ethnographic studies in

Göreme, Turkey, the author highlights the gender differences in the types of tourism

entrepreneurial activities that local men and women have had access to, as well as the

different levels of exposure to embodied encounters with tourists. According to local

social norms, it is shameful for Göreme women to move around in public spaces due to

the potential contact with strange men. In that sense, Tucker (2007) points to the need

for Göreme women to 'undo' the feeling of shame in order for them to work

comfortably in tourism spaces.

Johnston's work (2001, 2007) also identifies the role of pride/shame in the

construction of lesbian tourism spaces. While exploring the performative practices of a

woman's drumming group in Pride parades, Johnston is able to identify spaces of pride

(i.e. welcoming spaces where fun and excitement are allowed) and shame (linked to

Othering, the marginal body and heteronormalcy). In order to overcome shame

participants employed humour, exaggerated femininities and masculinities, hid their

personal identities and defied a tourist space that could be experienced as hurtful and

shaming. Johnston's theorization of pride/shame has led to more comprehensive

interpretations of affective performance by emphasizing the dynamics of emotions in the construction of space.

In looking at mountaineering, some authors have explored women's emotions in outdoor activities (Doran, 2016; Frohlick, 2006; Hall, 2018). Hall (2018) has relied on Ahmed's (2014) work to gain insights of emotions and to explore the affective dimensions of risk/fear. According to the author, women's weaker gender position and gender norms promote a sense of insecurity and fear of violence among them, which directly impacts their use of adventure tourism spaces. While analysing the emotional responses to risk/fear in a masculinized environment, Hall's findings endow risk with sensations of achievement and well-being. Her discussion of the "sentient and emotional body" can be linked to some of the embodiment processes examined in Pritchard et al.'s book (2007). While focusing on the embodiment of two emotions (fear and achievement), Hall (2018) opens new interpretations of emotional geographies by legitimising alternative identities for women in gendered tourism spaces.

In another recent example, Jiménez-Esquinas (2017) interprets Abu-Lughod and Ahmed's work to examine pride and resistance among Galician women producing bobbin lace. Her narrative exhibits feelings and emotions faced by tourism scholars, a strand that has been addressed by Pocock (2015) and Bakas (2017) underpinning the affective turn in tourism studies. The main contribution of this work is the analysis of affective ambivalence as a series of fluxes generated by craftswomen who embrace but also react to gender stereotypes though their tourist performances.

The examination of gender stereotypes in rural tourism has been central to Mexican scholars (Hernández-Bello et al., 2003). Even though this line of research has not explicitly focused on the analysis of affects (emotions and feelings), some studies acknowledge an affective ambivalence in the strategies adopted by Mexican rural

women as they try to reconcile their work in tourism with sociocultural restrictions in the use of tourism spaces (see Pérez-Ramírez et al., 2012; Rodríguez & Acevedo, 2015; Suárez-Gutiérrez et al., 2016).

Mexican rural women have been defined as highly grounded in the traditional social reproductive gender role of caretakers. The *mamá mexicana* (Mexican mother) is expected to devote herself to the family. This ideal of rural woman, emphasized through the rural idyll, is encapsulated in the archetype of *la doña,* which is a relevant conception in the Mexican imaginary. This concept has been used to depict the mythical figure of *Doña Marina*, also known as *La Malinche,* who represents an archetype of the national consciousness (González-Hernández, 2002). *La doña* has also been used in a figurative sense to refer to a woman who promotes *machismo* (Rodriguez, 2015). Likewise, it has been appropriated by actress María Félix (*la Doña*, with capital letter to emphasize her importance) to craftily construct the notion of a strong woman (Ocasio, 2010). However, our use of the concept of *la doña* is closer to León-Portilla's (1993) archetype of a rural woman, depicted as a hard worker who supports her often extended family, both economically and emotionally. Her identity is grounded in a maternal role (*mamá mexicana)* that defines her emotions as always centred on others, while hiding or ignoring her own emotional needs.

This review aimed to show how the scholarship on gender and emotions in tourism has proposed novel perspectives to broaden our understanding of tourism processes. Some key insights from the literature point to the way affective practices emerge as a response to local gender dynamics, and how the acceptance of negotiation fluxes that women engage with through tourism processes have the scope to promote new identities. In such a process, women can translate these changes (e.g. new identities

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and ways of relating to others) to their socio-spatial context, where their marginal body

can become more visible.

Method

The study employed a qualitative design in which Mexican women's work experiences

were situated within the wider sociocultural context. Semi-structured interviews were

conducted over four periods of fieldwork in several rural destinations in Mexico,

spanning 16 months. The first period was from February to September 2015; the second

one, from May to October 2016; the third, from September to November 2017; and the

last one, from June to July 2018. Interviews allowed to explore the diversity of rural

women's realities and focus on issues that were of particular concern to their lives

(Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Through this qualitative design, we attempted to co-

produce situated knowledge grounded on the participants' experiences. In terms of

positionality, we consider ourselves as insiders based on nationality (Mexican) and

language (native Spanish speakers), but outsiders in terms of the cultural position within

the areas of study (rural areas), and with sub-identities (Giwa, 2015) as mestiza,

university-educated, middle-class, urban women.

The study reports the findings from 49 interviews with Mexican women who

work in rural tourism. Research participants were identified during four different stages

of fieldwork in the states of Baja California (8), Sonora (4), Querétaro (5), Mexico (18),

Oaxaca (4) and Veracruz (10), and employing purposeful sampling, which consists on

"selecting information-rich cases strategically and purposefully" (Patton, 2002, p. 243).

Snowball sampling was employed to contact additional participants who were referred

to the authors by previous informants; interviews lasted 90 minutes on average. The

majority of the interviews were conducted face-to-face (39). In addition, following the

advantages and innovative uses of ICT in qualitative research (Janghorban et al., 2014;

Krouwel et al., 2019; Lo Iacono et al., 2016; Longhurst, 2017; Tavakoli & Mura, 2015),

we conducted some video-interviews (through diverse software that enables

conversation), which were also transcribed (10). Participants were between 18-65 years

old and worked in the following tourism and travel services: food and accommodation

(12), handicrafts and foodstuff (29), and guiding services (8). Some of the participants

were micro business owners (15), others worked in the family business (12), in a private

company (10) or a community-based enterprise (12).

Qualitative content analysis was employed for the systematic examination of the

interview data, using deductive and inductive approaches to coding. The deductive

approach was deemed appropriate to re-examine the prevalence of gender stereotypes

and emotions in rural tourism. Thus, initial codes, categories and themes were drawn

from the review of Mexican gender and tourism scholarship (see Figure 1).

[Insert figure 1 here]

Figure 1. Gender stereotypes in Mexican rural tourism

Source: Authors.

An inductive approach was employed to draw codes, categories and themes

from the interview data to learn about participant's lived experiences (Camprubí &

Coromina, 2016; Neuendorf, 2011) and emotional responses to the cultural stereotypes

and gendered work. The data analysis process included both manifest and latent content

analysis (Graneheim et al., 2017). During the manifest content analysis phase, we

classified the visible and surface content of text; whereas in the latent content analysis,

we coded the underlying meaning of the text, which requires a degree of researcher

interpretation. Overall, the analysis process entailed categorizing and finding themes

from key categories (i.e. gender stereotypes and women's affective/emotional

responses). In addition, non-participant observation, document review, and field notes

enriched and complemented the interview data. Some strategies employed to avoid

researchers' bias over the course of analysis and interpretation included: referring back

to the conceptual framework, triangulating data (i.e. contrasting the interview data with

the researcher observations and notes taken during the fieldwork), showing field notes

to colleagues, and keeping research questions firmly in mind (Miles & Huberman,

1994). Ethical guidelines were followed to ensure that all participants understood the

research objectives and the treatment that would be given to verbatim transcription of

interview data. Pseudonyms were employed in lieu of participants' names and some

demographic details were excluded in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Findings

Emotional responses to gendered rural tourism work

In general, tourism services and related productive activities (food, accommodation,

handicraft production and guiding services) were positively valued by participants as a

source of income despite their seasonal or irregular nature, because women thought this

type of work was more attractive than other traditional economic activities available.

This is consistent with the findings in other developing regions (e.g. Boonabaana, 2014;

Tran & Walter, 2014) and in the Latin American context (e.g. Martinez-Corona, 2003;

Rodríguez & Acevedo, 2015).

Even if the economic benefit generated by rural tourism is limited and their

burden is increased, participants saw tourism as an opportunity to improve their lives

(Hortensia, 45, married with 2 daughters, cooker, Las Margaritas, 2016; Susana, 32, married with 1 son, artisan, San Quintín, 2017; Teresa, 36, unmarried, ecotourist leader, Montepío, 2016). Sometimes they recognised the tensions produced by tourism work and experienced ambivalent fluxes which were negotiated or not (Jiménez-Esquinas, 2017; Johnston, 2007).

In some cases, women's participation in tourism work generated a sense of injustice and powerlessness. This is illustrated in the following account:

"At the beginning my husband told me that if I chose to work in tourism I must not neglect my family…I felt stressed all time and also angry and sad too, this is also his family not only mine, but I didn't quit… it was not easy... and eventually he changed a little bit and I feel proud of what I have achieved" (Marta, 42, married with 2 sons, rural gite owner, Montepío, 2016).

As tensions emerged, participants' struggles reflected an ambivalence when confronting the *status quo*. For example, the experience of shame, alongside with embarrassment and shyness, was commonly referred to in participants' accounts. Some interviewees recognised that rural communities tend to underestimate women's capacities to interact with strangers:

"we were very shy, we didn't like to talk with strangers… we were not raised that way, here it is the man who talks...it was difficult… we were very hesitant but now… now it is different when tourists come we don't stop talking" (Olga, 40, divorced with 1 son and 2 daughters, ecotourism project leader, Roca Partida, 2017).

An important number of rural women who worked in tourism reported to struggle during the first years of their participation (e.g. Adriana, 25, unmarried, artisan, El Carrizal, 2016; Juana, doll maker, 50, married with 4 sons and 1 daughter, artisan, Santiago Mexquititlán, 2016; Sara, 43, re-married with 2 daughters, ecotourism partner,

Bernal, 2017), but eventually used their work in tourism to gain self-confidence and

overcome what was socially sanctioned as inappropriate activities/spaces for women.

In particular, participants who performed masculinised activities reported a

constant comparison with male peers or the need to demonstrate that women could

accomplish as much as men or could perform even better: "you feel tired of always

having to prove yourself… or show that you are better than men, sometimes it is

exhausting..." (Laura, 34, single, adventure tourist guide, Jalcomulco, 2016). They also

had to deal with the stereotype that "women do not know the *monte* (the hills or

outdoors)" and that "their place is in the kitchen" (Patricia, 45, single with 1 daughter,

B&B employee, Landa de Matamoros, 2016). So, women who wanted to access higher

paying jobs in rural tourism such as tourist guides, faced this additional burden to prove

that they were as capable as their male peers (Lucía, 20, single, ecotourist guide, Ruiz

Cortinez, 2016; Manuela, 30, unmarried, adventure tourist guide, Jalcomulco, 2017).

There is a reputational issue in rural Mexico regarding women who wander around the

town interacting with men who are not from their communities, similar to what Tucker

(2007) found in Turkey. This is exemplified in the following account: "Some people

think that a woman will lose her good reputation if they talk to male tourists that she ...

may be looking for a man, it's frustrating I know, but I like what I do" (Patricia, op.

cit.). In these cases, the feeling of shame can serve to maintain women's segregation in

specific rural tourism activities.

The lack of recognition for women's work or the disregard for their

contributions is also reported by those engaged in other activities rather than guiding:

"It is sad but sometimes I feel like my family is not recognising my work, the

importance it has to me and to the rest of the community" (Margarita, 33, married with

2 sons, artisan, La Bocana, 2015). Participants also expressed disappointment when

family members or members of the wider community disregarded their entrepreneurial efforts: "Some people consider my effort as a secondary one, they minimise the hard work of being an entrepreneur…. 'it is a hobby', they say, 'it is not serious', 'her business is tiny'..." (Lidia, 30, married, rural gite partner, Bernal, 2016).

Women felt unwarranted pressure to quit their activities when dealing with malicious gossip, which is used as a mechanism to limit women's mobilities in Mexican rural societies:

> I need to go to meetings, to talk to clients, to go out of the community, some people
> gossip and my husband was jealous, I told him to trust me…but some women quit or
> change because the husband forbid them to get out of their house or the community
> (Ana María, 37 years old, divorced, souvenir shop owner from Bernal, 2017).

The disregard for their contributions and work triggered mixed affective responses from women (e.g. anger, sadness or disappointment), while malicious gossip had repercussions on women's self-esteem and even caused some women to abandon their productive activities in tourism. In a clear recognition of their gender roles, participants frequently expressed feeling burnout or emotional and physical exhaustion, due to bearing the responsibility for care and domestic work in their households, in addition to the work they perform in the family business, private enterprise or community-based tourism venture (Adriana, op. cit.; Lucía, op. cit.; Margarita, op. cit.).

Other women's emotions towards their work emerged from a sense of accomplishment; from receiving recognition for their work (from family, other members of the community and visitors); and a sense of enjoyment or even passion (love) towards the activities they perform. Even though some degree of enjoyment derived from their work in rural tourism was experienced by most of the participants, the sense of passion was more evident among women who perform creative work in

tourism (e.g. handicraft production or gastronomy), as demonstrated in the following

account:

> Ah, on a personal level, I love it. It changed us all, it changed our lives because, come
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> on, making handicraft pottery opens another world, right? Apart from the fact that we
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> make a living out of this, we entered into a very special world. I think that knowing a
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> lot of people of all types and social classes, I believe that one's work speaks for itself,
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> but it did change our lives ... I love my work. (Ana, 50, married with 2 daughters,
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> potter, Metepec, 2016).

Other emotions as happiness and joy were also experienced by participants as a

consequence of their work. Some women found in rural tourism the necessary spaces to

expand their networks to gain support:

> "So, you come here [to the workshop] and you interact with other *compañeras*, and you
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> always have fun and you even finish the craft without noticing it. It is more pleasant
>
> than if I stay alone at home. The other day somebody turned on the radio and we ended
>
> up dancing" (Julia, 37, married with 1 son, artisan, Ojoxapan, 2016).

In general, the social interactions with culturally aware or responsible tourists

were also considered pleasant:

> "When dinner is over, tourists stay at the *comedor* chatting with us or also when I am
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> cooking, they ask me about the food, the town, my life…. we talk about many things;
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> they tell me things too… all very interesting. I like to learn and have someone to talk
>
> to" (Romira, 53, married with 1 son, cook, Benito Juárez, 2015).

Through transgressing traditional gender norms and roles, rural women have

opened opportunities for change (Alba, 31, divorced with 1 son, tourist guide, Las

Margaritas, 2015; Olga, op. cit.). Despite the fact that research participants did not see

themselves as agents of change, it is important to recognise their quotidian acts of

negotiation and the potential impact these acts can have not only in their own lives but

in the lives of other women, as well as the diversity of emotions that they have

experienced or embodied in different ways (Hall, 2018; Wilson & Little, 2008).

Feminist and gender scholars have called for the development of alternative

gender roles in the context of rural tourism (Linehan & Walsh, 1999; Martínez-Corona,

2003; Rodríguez & Acevedo, 2015). Some of the research participants also reflected on

the need to transform traditional gender roles, as illustrated in the following account:

"some people consider that women cannot be a rural tourist guide because they lack the

strength or skills, but we are proving otherwise and our local guides feel very proud of

it" (Marisa, 26, single, tourist guide, Jalcomulco, 2018). In this context, women

experienced a range of affective or emotional responses due to the social pressure to

conform to traditional gender roles and the prevalent gender stereotypes in tourism

work (Jiménez-Esquinas, 2017). These findings are consistent with other studies that

have explored the links between gender and tourism work in rural contexts (Hernández

et al., 2005; Ratten & Dana, 2017; Suárez-Gutiérrez et al., 2016; Tran & Walter, 2014).

One of the most common stereotypes that emerged from the literature and was

confirmed in the interviews was that "women are not interested in tourism".

Participants' accounts illustrate how women were frequently left out of the community

conversations around rural tourism initiatives:

> In this community the invitation to participate in tourism was given at the *ejido*
>
> [communal] meeting and since it is considered as a space for men, women were not
>
> invited - 'it is not for women' - they were saying (Rocío, 38, single with 1 son and 2
>
> daughters, rural gite partner, Ruiz Cortínez, 2015).

Contrary to what the stereotype claims, women were not indifferent to the

organization of tourism activities in their communities; in fact, they expressed anger or

disappointment at not having been invited to these initial planning meetings (Lorena, 32

years old, single with 1 daughter, tourist guide from Las Margaritas, 2016; Olga, op.

cit.).

Another common stereotype is that "women are not good at business" and these

extends to the notions that "women are not interested in training" or "they do not like to

make decisions" (Rocío, op. cit.; Alba, op. cit., Ana, op. cit.), which are experienced as

limitations and injustices (Ahmed, 2009). Most participants were well aware of these

gender stereotypes and reflected on how they have overcome their emotions by gaining

access to activities and spaces traditionally assigned to men: "Through rural tourism we

have been able to access places were only men used to participate, like the *Ejido*

Assembly. I felt nervous and proud when I explained our recent project that involved

the whole community in front of the Assembly members and others" (Alba, op. cit,).

A way in which women have been able to contest gender stereotypes is through

the continuous interaction with people from outside the community (visitors and

tourists) even if this is discouraged by local sociocultural norms (Tucker, 2007). The

following account illustrates this: "People from outside the community recognise our

work and I like to see how they appreciate our work… you can do many things you

weren´t aware" (Juana, op. cit.).

Participants also reflected that their work in rural tourism was as valuable as the

work performed by their male peers, but they also recognized some gendered

constraints. Similar to what was reported by Johnston (2007) or Hall (2018),

participants embodied more than one emotion in their performance of gendered tourism

rural work. Some of them abandoned tourism activities, but others were able to

negotiate the gender norms that underestimated them (Hall, 2018).

As stated before, feminist and tourist scholars have emphasized the role of

emotions in power relations as a site of resistance to gender norms (Hall, 2018;

Jiménez-Esquinas, 2017; Tucker, 2007; Wilson & Little, 2008). Our findings show that some women have taken advantage of tourism to negotiate gender norms and have experienced this improvement with a sense of pride as illustrated in the following account: "I try to educate both my daughters and son not to maintain stereotypes" (Amalia, 50, married, embroiderer, Sontecomapan, 2015). Other women have used tourism to gain visibility and recognition in their communities: "...we have been able to get access to places were only men used to participate like the *Ejido* Assembly" (Olivia, 33, married with 1 daughter and 1 son, rural gite partner, Sontecomapan, 2015). We want to emphasize that the lack of family or wider community support makes the negotiation of gender roles even more challenging for participants: "some women quit or change because the husbands forbid them to get out of their house or the community…. I feel sad for them" (Sonia, 29, married with 1 daughter, artisan jewellery, Jalpan de Serra, 2015). However, as stated by Martínez-Corona (2003) and Vizcaino-Suárez (2018), women's negotiations of gender roles to advance equality are a long-term project that leads to incremental changes over time, but these changes are not exempt from social backlash.

Likewise, women involved in tourism experience ambivalent fluxes (Jiménez-Esquinas, 2017; Johnston, 2007). In this study, women's affective and emotional responses were strongly intertwined with the productive and spatial restrictions established by gender roles (Wilson & Little, 2008). Tourism opened new possibilities and generated environments for women to embody emotions and transgress traditional gender norms in rural Mexico. However, the path is not straightforward, because women who negotiate established social norms are often disqualified and their emotions mistreated through public scolding and ridicule (see Ahmed, 2014).

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Discussion: women's emotions and gendered work in Mexican rural tourism

In this study, emotions emerged in response to the social pressure to comply with social

norms and these affective or emotional responses generated ambivalent fluxes

(Jimenez-Esquinas, 2017). The emotional dimensions of gendered rural tourism work

are influenced by complex processes and they have significant impacts on Mexican

rural women's use of day-to-day spaces.

Our analysis identified some core affective or emotional responses by women in

relation to their work in tourism. Shame was one of the most relevant emotions, and we

consider it important because it is frequently employed by communities to restrict the

use of public rural environments in Mexico. Shame is related to insecurity with a

twofold meaning: a lack of self-confidence, but also a type of fear to outsiders. Similar

to the experiences of Göreme women in Turkey (Tucker, 2007), Mexican participants

had also begun to 'undo' the emotion of shame, slowly overcoming the sociocultural

norms that attach shame to women's interaction with strangers (mainly male tourists or

other male stakeholders, such as consultants, researchers, suppliers or trainers), to

potentially work more comfortably in tourism environments. Furthermore, some of the

women in our study used their emotions to negotiate gender stereotypes in a similar

fashion to the participants in Johnston's (2007) study, who embodied affective

performances to overcome their shame and transform it into pride. For example, Ana

and Olga's initial shame or embarrassment of working in tourism led way to a feeling of

entitlement to use public tourist spaces and other spaces in the community (like the

Ejido Assembly), which generated happiness and joy.

Another finding we want to highlight is the role of emotions as a form of social

control that defines the performance of tourism work. Some of the most relevant

constraints rural women face take the form of gender stereotypes that interact with

affective or emotional responses such as shame. The shame experienced by participants

exposes a social mechanism to control not only the spaces where women move, but also

the activities they can perform. Shame combined with local social norms are embodied

by rural women and have an impact on their self-esteem, by: a) making them feel not

capable of working with tourist/visitors; and b) having to avoid gossip that will damage

their reputation. In this case, the affective performances promoted by the involvement in

rural tourism can foster negotiations that allow women to gain self-confidence and a

sense of accomplishment.

Responses linked to anger, disappointment or sadness also resulted from the

prevalence of gender stereotypes, as women experienced the constraints of gendered

jobs or gendered spaces in tourism work. This situation was more evident in the case of

young women who became interested in activities traditionally ascribed to men. This

was experienced by Marisa and Laura, tourist guides who have had to carve their place

in the masculinised niche of adventure tourism; and also by Ana María, who faced a

masculinised environment as entrepreneur. However, at the same time, emotions such

as pride, accomplishment or joy are also reported by interviewees due to their

participation in tourism, thus emphasizing the ambivalent fluxes that can confront

women in tourism (Jiménez-Esquinas, 2017). Among our participants, these emotions

were described as evidence of improvement in women's lives and employed to justify

demands for further advancement. These ambivalent fluxes must not be oversimplified

because according to our respondents, their involvement in rural tourism has not been

free from contradictions or struggle.

A relevant example of these contradictions refers to the burden of care and

emotional work, which continues to fall mainly on women. The traditional *mamá*

mexicana and *la doña* are strong social constructions in rural Mexico and continue to be

entrenched in rural tourism. Thus, strategies to improve women's participation in rural

tourism and overcome gender stereotypes and embedded emotions, require a

recognition of the value of care and emotional work, which turns out to be a core

function of the maintenance of social life and a relevant factor of culture and power

(Ahmed, 2004). In our view, this is the first step in reorganizing the division of labour

in contexts where care and emotional work are both very important and very time

consuming, such as the rural contexts we have examined. The sense of inequity is well

founded in anger as an emotion generated by a lack of equitable arrangements in the

division of labour, but a sense of achievement also emerges when women are able to

overcome these inequities. In general, negotiation of care and emotional work generates

affective ambivalences that can be experienced as an exhausting and controversial

process: women can love their relatives but feel angry when their workload (in and

outside of the house) increases.

The review of the literature and our findings also show that tourism has the

potential to promote changes in gender stereotypes when correctly addressed. In our

study, Mexican women recognised the role of rural tourism in opening spaces to

negotiate gender stereotypes, but also as an activity that may reproduce or reinforce

them. As noted by Ahmed (2014), emotions reflect how social forms (such as traditional

gender norms) are ingrained and difficult to transform because of repetition. In our

opinion, even if rural tourism is a modern activity, the rural idyll and the quest for

authenticity tends to reinforce gender stereotypes that devalue women's work.

Therefore, we propose a framework to improve women's participation in rural tourism,

accounting for their affective/emotional responses (see Figure 2).

[Insert figure 2 here]

Figure 2. Framework for improving women's participation in rural tourism and overcoming gendered work.

Source: Authors.

The core of our proposal draws from Ahmed's notion of emotions as a source of movement and takes into account posterior work of emotions centred in tourism and gender studies. In that regard we have also considered the ambivalent fluxes (Jiménez-Esquinas, 2017), embodiment emotions (Hall, 2018), as well as Johnston's (2001, 2007) political dimension of emotions that interweave the personal and the public spheres of life.

As mestiza, middle-class, urban and university-educated Mexican women, we would like to highlight the relevance of avoiding gender stereotypes in rural tourism. However, not all the research participants construed the disparities that we examined as gender inequalities. This was especially evident when economic and monetary benefits were involved and trumped other sociocultural considerations. Following Ahmed (2014), emotions allow people to: "feel their way" and "the effects of 'not following' the scripts can be multiple" (p. 146) and may lead to social conflict. For women to negotiate gender roles effectively they must improve both their economic and socio-cultural standing, otherwise they will avoid any negotiation and maintain the *status quo*.

As stated by Ahmed (2004, p. 121) "the circulation of signs of affect shapes the materialization of collective bodies", *las mujeres*, women who work in rural tourism in Mexico conform Ahmed's affective economy that materialised through an economic activity heavily centred in care work. *La doña,* a rural woman whose identity is primary restricted to the kitchen and the house, takes advantage of the skills that she has developed, which previously were demanded by the family in the domestic realm, and

now are also offered to tourists in the public sphere.

Conclusions

The study of emotions has become a fertile area to promote critical tourism and gender

studies. Some of the concepts highlighted by scholars, such as affective performance

(Johnston, 2001, 2007), affective dimensions (Hall, 2018), ambivalent fluxes (Jiménez-

Esquinas, 2017), and the embodiment of emotions (Ahmed, 2014; Tucker, 2007; Wilson

& Little, 2008) have provided a useful framework to explore rural women's emotional

responses to gendered tourism work. Since Mexican rural tourism can be anchored in

local social norms and the rural idyll, participants in the study received contradictory

messages and tensions emerged in the negotiation of new gender roles. From the point

of view of participants, the possibility of gaining access to economic benefits was a

strong motivation to participate in tourism; however, the availability of gendered

occupations and reinforcement of gender stereotypes made some women question the

transformational power of tourism work, leading to the emergence of ambivalent fluxes.

Participation in rural tourism allowed participants to experience an affective

performance, both in public and private spaces, where their emotions became a

mechanism to negotiate gender roles.

Even though in general Mexican women appreciate the role of rural tourism in

their lives, the implications of performing tourism work tended to go beyond the realm

of the individual experience, and contradictions and tensions arose in the family and

wider community spheres. As this experience shows, women cannot be left alone in the

process of negotiating gender stereotypes and the need for wider social recognition and

appreciation of the value of care and emotional work was identified. To contest the

power of repetition and the "stickiness" of social norms (Ahmed, 2014), it is crucial that

all rural stakeholders are involved and incorporate gender mainstreaming strategies to

improve women's participation in tourism. Enterprises also must work on introducing

gender protocols to prevent occupational segregation in tourism work or the gendered

use of tourism spaces. Scholars could also contribute to examining the gender

dimensions of tourism work in rural contexts, monitor social change and share best

practice. A relevant limitation of this research was focusing on binary gender identities

and not considering other gender identities that tend to be rendered invisible in rural

tourism studies. Furthermore, we suggest that the study of gender, work and emotions is

expanded in the Latin American context and other emerging regions to explore affective

practises and their implication in rural spaces.

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Women are not interested in tourism

Women are not good at business
Women are not interested in training
Women do not like to make decisions
Women do not know how to deal with tourists
Women always criticize other women
Women prefer to stay at home and take care of their families

Provision of food and accommodation & production of foodstuffs

Women feel safer while working closer to town
Women like to work at the *comedor* (restaurant) or hostel
Women do not have the skills to provide services for tourists
Women do not like to interact with tourists
A woman's place is in the kitchen

Production of folk arts

Women can hurt themselves if they carve wooden handicrafts
Women cannot do the physically demanding tasks of pottery production
Painting and decorating pottery handicrafts is for women
Knitting handicrafts is for women

Provision of tour guiding services

Women do not know the *monte* (the hills, the outdoors)
Women do not know how to handle animals
Women do not like trekking
Women are not strong
Women do not like to take risks
Women's reputation is endangered if they work with male tourists

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Affective practices related to gendered rural tourism work

Shame: used as a mechanism to control women

Rural tourism attributes

Small & medium enterprises
Family or community-based enterprises
Rural idyll based
Low paid
Limited career development
Long working hours
Work overload

Personal dimensions

Stress
Job burnout
Work-family conflict
Emotional exhaustion
Generational differences

Perpetuation of gender stereotypes in rural tourism

Inequalities

Gendered Jobs
Gendered use of spaces / environments
Gendered emotions

No

Improvement of women's participation in rural tourism

Yes

Conflict & negative outcomes
Burnout
Disregard
Malicious gossip

Value of emotional and care work
Conflict & positive outcomes
Emotions as resistance
Recognition