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Citar a referência original:

Pato, M. L., Cunha, D., Barroco, C., Cunha, C., & Kastenholz, E. (2024). Female Leadership in Wine Tourism in Portugal. *European Countryside*, 16(1), 110-133.

## FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN WINE TOURISM IN PORTUGAL

### Highlights:

- Women possess the personality traits in terms of entrepreneurship, and should not be stereotyped.
- Women appear to be those that follow a shared management approach.
- Women are an interesting target to stimulate regional wine tourism network development.
- Society at large and women need to recognize their potential as agents of change.

**ABSTRACT:** Based on data collected from managers of wine tourism businesses in rural areas in Portugal, this study highlights the equal potential of female leadership in wine tourism. Specifically, women's profiles, management practices and leadership narratives were analyzed and contrasted with corresponding data reported by their male counterparts. Concerning personality traits, no statistical difference between men and women was identified, which was also the case for some management practices, with sustainability concerns being important for both male and female business managers. Differences were found for communication with markets, being dominated by online devices, particularly with social networks in the case of women. As for their leadership position, women further tend to prefer a shared management approach in opposition to a more individualist management style followed by men.

**KEYWORD:** Wine tourism; rural tourism; gender stereotypes; female leadership; business success; sustainable rural development; Portugal

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been responsible over the years for an evident evolution of the gender role within the social spectrum (Ibănescu et al., 2018). Gender studies in tourism have been a hot topic, yielding gender equality in all social fields (Swain, 1995), which is also one of the sustainable development objectives outlined by the United Nations World Organization (UN, 2016).

Stressing the importance of human resources in tourism, the UNWTO (2019) highlights the role of women in the development of the tourism sector, and their important contribution to tourism management. Simultaneously, tourism assumes itself as a route towards the empowerment of women into leading positions. Previous studies showed differences in the female performance in management and leadership positions (Costa et al., 2017; Hallinger et al., 2016).

While recognising these differences and the importance of women's empowerment, to the best of our knowledge, past scientific research has insufficiently addressed leadership issues associated with gender in hospitality and tourism, particularly in rural areas, where the work of women remains largely invisible (Annes & Wright, 2015).

However, multifunctional agriculture in general, and rural tourism in particular, provides women with new opportunities to assume leading positions and to move from societal invisibility to roles that hold promise for (personal and social) empowerment (Cánoves et al., 2004). Furthermore, several studies show that women bring innovative ideas and sensitivity to rural tourism (Cone, 1995; Duarte & Pereira, 2018; Wright & Annes, 2014), since many apply the knowledge and skills accumulated in the family and local community also to the tourism context (Koutsou et al., 2009).

In wine tourism, particularly family businesses seems to provide opportunities for women, despite standards of male dominance (Livat & Jaffré, 2022). Women have also emerged, often from the family context, as entrepreneurs and presenting a different, but effective and efficient management style, creating networks and stimulating new governance initiatives (Livat & Jaffré, 2022). Accordingly, currently in wine tourism many women play a prominent role, *ranging from wine production, over visitor management to research, hereby demonstrating a particular aptitude for communication and marketing, interpreting well the needs and preferences of the modern consumer* (Chironi et al., 2012, p. 18). The aforementioned is evident in the recent D'Uva – Portugal Wine Girls network, which thanks to the power of their women founders promote creativity and innovation, fundamental in engaging with consumers (Santos et al, 2019).

Based on a 4-years research project on wine tourism in rural areas (TWINE - Co-creating sustainable Tourism & WINE Experiences in rural area), this paper goes beyond characterizing women's profile in management positions in rural wine tourism to reveal their distinctiveness in comparison to men, within an increasingly competitive market. The purpose of the study is, specifically, to identify and discuss gender differences in leadership behavior/management practice between women and men in the wine tourism sphere.

Methodologically, this qualitative study is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews and questionnaires directed at suppliers in leading management positions in wine tourism enterprises located in the Center Region of Portugal, specifically in the Dão and Bairrada wine routes.

The paper is organized in four sections, following the introduction. Section 2 re-views the literature concerning women in rural tourism, women in leaderships positions and women in wine tourism. The context, study design and methodological procedures are explained in section 3. Section 4 presents and discusses the main results. Finally, in the conclusion (Section 5) the study's main contributions are summarized, limitations pointed out, and possible avenues for future research suggested.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Women in rural tourism**

Research on women's role in rural businesses, especially in the context of tourism, has attracted increasing interest. According to Ahuja & Cooper (2004), research on women in rural tourism is more recent than that of women in tourism in general. Nevertheless, rural tourism stands out as one of the business areas, in which more rural women are engaged, therefore making them a relevant target of study for understanding the dynamics of rural development (Ballesteros et al., 2014).

Several studies have been developed in recent years that focus on the role of women in rural tourism, all over the world, e.g.: Catalonia and Galicia in Spain (Cánoves et al., 2004; Garcia-Ramon et al., 1995), Kerala and Rajasthan in India (Ahuja & Cooper, 2004), three villages of the Kalecik district of Ankara in Turkey (Akpınar et al., 2005), the Austrian Alps (Oedl-Wieser, 2017), the Greek countryside (Koutsou et al., 2009), New Zealand (Bensemann & Hall, 2010), Iran (Arzjano & Rahiminezhad, 2011; Ashrafi & Hadi, 2019; Yasouri & Kalurazi, 2015), Gaziler Village in Turkey (Külekcı et al., 2012), the village of Cuandixia in China (Ling et al., 2013), China (Xu et al., 2018), Romania (Nemirschi & Craciun, 2014), Planaltina's Rajadinha Circuit in Brazil (Duarte & Pereira, 2018) and Murcia in Spain (Nicolás et al., 2020).

Nowadays, rural tourism may play an important role in empowering rural women, providing them economic independence, boosting their socio-economic role and professional status (Yasouri & Kalurazi, 2015). Several authors agree that the work of women is key in the development of rural tourism (Garcia-Ramon et al., 1995). Rural tourism can, indeed, be an important instrument for creating job and social interaction opportunities for rural women (Akpınar et al., 2005). According to Duarte & Pereira (2018), rural tourism promotes multiple social benefits for women, ranging from their remaining in rural areas and improvement in quality of life, to intangible benefits such as increased self-esteem, due to the recognition of their work, achievement of knowledge, and opening of new horizons.

Rural tourism is often recognized as providing local populations a good reason for staying there instead of moving to cities (Fons et al., 2011), as rural communities facing decline of traditional agriculture need to adopt different survival strategies (Kheiri & Nasihatkon, 2016). This potential is particularly evident if rural tourism simultaneously stimulates traditional local food and wine production and sales, valued by visitors also

after their holiday stay (Kastenholz et al, 2021). In this context, the development of rural tourism has allowed women to find new jobs in the field of hospitality and even opportunities to create their own jobs and to develop new activities. Women can often continue in their family farming, while selling agricultural products, creating handicraft items for sale, organizing visits to a vineyard or a cheese producer, engaging in (eventually shared) fruit or wine harvest, promoting show cooking classes and gardening or biological farming workshops organizing guided walks in the outdoors, amongst many other activities. These local-resource-based, sensory-rich and involving activities may be developed in rural areas, making place experiences more appealing and meaningful and generating place attachment (Kastenholz et al., 2020), as well as extra income to the territories and rural women involved in such offerings.

Külekcı et al. (2012) highlight that socioeconomic development of rural regions can only be achieved with the active participation of both men and women in social and economic life. A study developed by Duarte & Pereira (2018) in Planaltina's Rajadinha Circuit in Brazil concludes that women have gained space in the labour market and their workforce begins to be valued, not only as a supplement but as a key element in these activities. The woman most often assumes multiple demanding tasks and roles, being capable of being a mother, wife and professional. However, Arzjano & Rahiminezhad (2011) claim that, despite their important position in rural labour, they are hardly ever acknowledged as producers or recognized for the management of resources through their productive work. Oedl-Wieser (2017) identified the prevalence of many patricarchical structures, in the Austrian Alps, with adverse social and cultural norms often getting in the way of the development and recognition of female leadership, although they often play an unquestionably relevant, however invisible role in their communities, enhancing rural development also through their engagement in climate change adaptation and preservation of biodiversity. Külekçi et al. (2012) report that, in Gazeler Village/ Turkey, women are more willing to do the job they know best (e.g. weaving, local handicraft and cooking), typically according to gender roles, therefore significantly contributing to the development of tourism. Ling et al. (2013) found that women in rural tourism in China have become "rural village keepers" through continuing to live and work in "authentic ways", thereby sustaining and prolonging the lifespan of their village, representing the authenticity of Chinese rural culture. Women also tend to value the opportunity to work and contribute to the family's economic well-being without leaving home. Rural tourism is, in this sense, viewed as a good strategy for continuing their normal economic activity, while helping maintain their family property (Garcia-Ramon et al., 1995). Ashrafi & Hadi (2019) found a significant correlation between the development of tourism in the rural towns in Iran and the economic empowerment of women in these localities. Iakovidou (2002) studied the interesting case of women's agritourist cooperatives that were able to present most original and alternative rural tourism projects, based on female cooperation.

Research has shown that women's work is essential for agricultural homesteads to survive. Women are usually designated to welcome guests in rural homes, in agreement with their traditional caring role in their household, promote the values of the local culture and protect the environment. However, empowerment means more than working more and contributing to the family income, it means appearing as a manager of the business and assuming a leadership role, bringing added value to business operations and the attractiveness of the destinations, where women lead. Cánoves et al. (2004) even considers women as the main protagonists of tourism in rural areas.

Rural tourism may, indeed, be an important tool for gender equality in the labour market with women assuming a major role in multiple rural labour contexts, thereby consistently building their social and professional identity (Duarte & Pereira, 2018). According to Nicolás et al. (2020), there is evidence of rural women as well as the environment in which they live having undergone large transformations in recent decades in many countries. For these authors, currently, rural women with high educational levels are increasingly found in positions of responsibility that were previously inaccessible. On the other hand, other studies found that women in rural tourism typically assume gender-typical professional roles, associated to caring, housekeeping and cleaning, while men stand out as more in charge of the business, despite women's increasingly recognized management capacities.

Thus, rural women were found to be skilled in identifying challenges and solutions in the hospitality business, as well as prioritizing them according to existing capacities (Yasouri & Kalurazi, 2015). The rapid development of rural tourism is also encouraging rural women to actively participate in tourism entrepreneurship, thereby not only contributing to economic poverty reduction but also providing feasible paths for alleviating poverty in knowledge, rights and other aspects (Xu et al., 2018). The important role of women in rural development has been repeatedly discussed in the literature, but the role and specificity of female entrepreneurship in rural development is relatively novel issue (Ballesteros et al., 2014) and it is important to be studied.

## **2.2. Women in leadership positions in tourism**

In the quest for sustainable regional development, local stakeholders are crucial, including entrepreneurs, their actions and interaction, where also -and increasingly- women assume an outstanding role (Nicolás et al., 2020). Although tourism is an important source of employment for women (UNWTO, 2019), the numerical superiority of women in tourism is not reflected in leadership or management positions (Baum, 2013; Carvalho et al., 2019), and this underrepresentation is amplified by the technological level of organizations (Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2020). A positive evolution in this regard has, however, been recognized with the business community making progress in ensuring female representation in the top hierarchy positions (Babic & Hansez, 2021). Entrepreneurial initiatives can also contribute to mitigate gender inequalities in leadership and management in tourism, with women's roles being widely acknowledged, especially in low density, rural territories (Nicolás et al., 2020). Arun et al. (2018) on female leadership in the hospitality industry revealed their important contribution to success through their high levels of tolerance, patience and problem-solving capacities, significantly stimulating both formal and informal economic dynamics. It is also necessary to bear in mind that, in comparison with the older women, who opt for a cooperative ownership model to distribute risks, younger, educated women were more risk-taking and opted for private business and ownership structures, suggesting that the role of age and education as additional factors determining female entrepreneurs' behavior (Thirumalesh Madanaguli et al., 2021).

As previously mentioned, the female role in preserving rural community life and promoting socioeconomic development has been highlighted by several studies (e.g. Ashrafi & Hadi, 2019; Ling et al., 2013; Nicolás et al., 2020). However, women still have to overcome many constraints to reach top management positions in tourism

(Litwin et al., 2019), and some of those barriers come from the family milieu (Bessière, 2014). Bessière (2014) found that, in wine-grape farms in Cognac/ France, women have to deal with asymmetric positions when it comes to taking over a family business, being frequently deprecated by their brothers. Many stress the importance of measures to mitigate this gender inequality in leadership and management positions. Freund & Hernandez-Maskivker (2021), for example, underline the importance of supporting entities, namely management associations, in empowering women, giving visibility to collective problems and helping find appropriate solutions.

Leadership has been widely studied in the last decades, in diverse fields, using different lenses and multiple approaches. Despite the extensive research in the field, the efforts to understand leaders' behaviours have not always been successful. Criticism to existing research includes a lack of clear conceptualization, resulting in an overlap amongst concepts and the absence of causal models that include moderating and mediating processes (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Behrendt et al. (2017) suggest an integrative model of leadership behaviour, in which two meta-categories are proposed to analyse leadership behaviours: task-oriented (change vs. routine) and relations-oriented behaviour that can be directed towards individuals who are internal vs. external to the team. As explained by the authors, "leadership behaviour ought to be (1) task-oriented to support the accomplishment of objectives and (2) relations-oriented to influence the followers such that they invest their efforts into the task-oriented process" (Behrendt et al., 2017, p. 239). It is expected that task-oriented behaviours contribute to reaching goals, while relations-oriented behaviours support (even if indirectly) this process by providing followers' resources. The task-oriented leadership behaviour, supports the process of accomplishing objectives by improving understanding in the evaluation phase, reinforcing motivation in the deliberation phase and facilitating implementation in the planning and action phase. The relations-oriented leadership behaviour consists of three behaviour categories that trigger employees' effective engagement in the process of achieving objectives: (1) stimulating coordination to synchronize efforts, (2) promoting cooperation to encourage greater individual contribution, and (3) providing resources to expand valuable contributions (Behrendt et al., 2017).

Management practices in rural tourism reflect some pragmatism in their main approaches, with previous research indicating short-term oriented planning, a clear focus on communication efforts and service quality, pursuing clients' satisfaction (Bosworth & Farrell, 2011; Cunha et al., 2018), while long-term strategic marketing approaches are rather rare (Pato & Kastenholz, 2017). Entrepreneurial practices have sometimes been reported as quite proactive, more sustainable and, in some profiles, more entrepreneurial, as well (Boluk & Mottiar, 2014; Cunha et al., 2018). Here, local and non-local networks and well-articulated business ecosystems play a determinant role in tourism supply-chain development and in assuring memorable experiences to tourists (Salvado & Kastenholz, 2017). Rural tourism experiences are complex, based on different elements such as heritage, landscape, people's way of life and their memories, requiring the involvement of many destination actors and features, and entrepreneurs in this context seem particularly sensitive to this reality (Boluk & Mottiar, 2014; Cunha et al., 2018). Several studies in rural tourism contexts (e.g. Boluk & Mottiar, 2014; Bosworth & Farrell, 2011; Cunha et al., 2020) show entrepreneurs are often much aligned with sustainability values, which is visible in their management practices and behaviors. Small dimension of enterprises, networking efforts, high

personalization of services, organic farming and the provision of diverse and complementary activities (commerce, agriculture and tourism), show clear evidence of these sustainability concerns, along with a strong business-success commitment.

### **2.3. Wine tourism – a special case of rural tourism**

Wine tourism is considered a type of special interest tourism that has attracted increasing attention (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002; Trauer, 2006), with a trend of worldwide growth (e.g. new vineyards, more wine tourism) (Massa & Bédé, 2018; O'Neill & Charters, 2000). Wine tourism is at the intersection of the wine production and tourism sectors (Getz, 2000), permitting synergies and cross-selling effects interesting to both fields (Fountain et al., 2008; Gómez et al., 2019). It is also generally associated with rural tourism and, more specifically, agro-tourism (Carmichael, 2005; Costa & Kastenholz, 2009), as it allows contact with farms, vineyards, wineries, and other elements that characterize rural areas. Wine tourism has been defined in several ways and may be understood as a visit to vineyards, wineries, festivals and shows related to wine, of which wine tasting and/ or contact with the attributes of a wine region are the visitors' main motivating factors (Hall, 1996). Nevertheless, a broader definition of wine tourism has also been accepted, conceptualized in an ecosystemic logic (Salvado & Kastenholz, 2017), as 'terroir tourism', i.e. a more generalist, multi-motivational travel to explore wine-growing territories and their diverse attractions (Holland et al., 2017; Kastenholz et al., 2021). Accordingly, wine tourism refers to the act of traveling with the objective of visiting, learning about and enjoying experiences in wineries and wine regions, as well as exploring their culture and local lifestyle, encompassing both the offer of services and a perspective of destination marketing (Western Australian Tourism Commission, 2000).

These experiences are based on endogenous products and resources, landscapes and culture, sometimes articulated in networks and yielding territorial branding (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2003). It is related to (slow) food tourism, contrasting with the culture of fast food, urban, global and standardized hospitality experiences (Sidali et al., 2015). Wine tourism includes therefore tasting and buying wines in wineries or wine cellars, as well as participation in a variety of unique experiences, such as grape harvesting, treading, workshops related to wine tasting and gastronomy (Costa, 2014), experiences related to the vineyard landscape, the natural environment and diverse facets of regional culture (Carmichael, 2005; Holland et al., 2017; Peters, 1997), sometimes offered in articulated networks and wine routes (Kastenholz & Lane, 2022).

One must note that wine tourism is not always primarily motivated by wine, with a diversity of visitors travelling through wine producing regions and visiting wineries, amongst other services and attractions (Byrd et al., 2016; Ding, 2002; Getz & Brown, 2006). Briefly, wine tourism may be occasional, intentional, excursionist or overnight, with any visitor of a wine region and its broader offer, more or less related to wine, being a 'wine tourist' (O'Neill & Palmer, 2004). Thus, wine tourists are a heterogeneous population with diverse motivations. This heterogeneity becomes clear in Pratt's study (2014), where a little more than half of the interviewees classified themselves as "interested in wine" (55%), followed by those "curious about wine" (17%), "wine lovers" (15%) and, finally, those "not interested in wine" (12%).

Regardless of the type of wine tourists, wine tourism has the potential to help revitalize rural wine-growing territories (Costa & Kastenholtz, 2009; Gómez et al., 2019) through, on the one hand, tourism itself and, on the other hand, the sales of wine and other local products (Getz & Brown, 2006; Kastenholtz et al., 2016). These dynamics additionally promote territorial brands, relevant for tourism, wine and other local products (Harvey et al., 2014). Wine tourism can add value to regional heritage (material, immaterial and natural) and thereby promote local identity and quality of life of local communities, as well as their social capital (Harvey et al., 2014; Santos, 2009), thus contributing to sustainable regional development (Costa & Kastenholtz, 2009; Hall et al., 2000).

## **2.4 Women in the wine industry**

*Women and wine presents an increasingly productive association, a trend in many regions and countries took the form of a real phenomenon (...), but it seems that no other area has strongly excluded women in positions of influence for so long* (Pavel, 2012). Additionally and despite the diversity of studies developed in recent years on wine tourism, the role of women in this sector has been little researched and there is no empirical support to prove the rate at which women are progressing to top roles in the wine industry (Galbreath, 2018). However, in a study developed by Duarte Alonso et al. (2020) about entrepreneurial women in the wine industry, they recognised persistent barriers for women to work in the wine industry, while also acknowledging increasing opportunities. Importantly, the authors in the aforementioned study suggest female sensitivity, associated to detail-orientation in service encounters and subtlety in winemaking, as a relevant key differentiating trait. In turn, Chironi et al. (2014) found that women in the wine sector pay great attention to communication and technical innovation, as catalysts of enterprise development. Indeed, the female managers in the study conducted by these authors are those who make the decisions in the wine enterprise, are responsible for taking risks, but also successful in making suitable (innovative) choices. Moreover, women are observed for having high moral and ethical standards, being environmentally sensitive and demonstrating innovative leadership styles (Galbreath, 2014), which should have a positive impact on the competitiveness and social responsibility of the wine industry (Galbreath, 2018). Additionally, considering the strong capacity of women to absorb knowledge about new trends from export markets and exploit it for commercial purposes, Galbreath (2020) found support for the relationship between export intensity and green innovations, which is particularly visible in the role of the operations manager (Galbreath and Tisch, 2020).

## **3. THE CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES**

### **3.1. Wine routes in Portugal**

Viticulture has been identified as one of the most dynamic sectors of Portugal's agriculture, being the fifth largest wine producer in the European Union despite the country's relatively small scale, already presenting interesting levels of internationalization (Simões, 2008). The country is rich in diversity regarding both its grapes – with around 250 diverse grapes presenting one of the highest levels of grape diversity internationally – and its *terroirs* (Kastenholtz et al, 2022; Simões, 2008; Turismo de Portugal, 2019). Despite the country's increasing international recognition as producing also high-quality wines, it is still not a well-known wine tourism

destination, a situation that the national tourism board is trying to change, by presenting the ambition of making Portugal a ‘must-see and sustainable wine tourism destination worldwide’ (Turismo de Portugal, 2019).

In Portugal there are 14 wine regions (IVV, s.d.), with twelve wine routes that have developed inside the larger wine regions context (Kastenholz et al, 2022). Wine routes are increasingly recognized as central to wine tourism (Ingrassia et al., 2022; Kastenholz & Lane, 2022) and sustainable destination development (Partalidou & Tilkeridou, 2023; Salvado *et al*, 2023). Indeed, what distinguishes wine routes is that wine tourists can move along these routes, learning about wine regions and their unique wine production, visiting wineries, tasting and buying the wine produced here (Ingrassia et al., 2022), while additionally enjoying local food and culture as well as diverse landscape and heritage experiences, presented in an articulated manner that increases the overall appeal of the destination and all its agents of supply (Partalidou & Tilkeridou, 2023; Salvado *et al*, 2023).

According to information available on the website of the organization of Wine Routes of Portugal (<http://rotadosvinhosdeportugal.pt/>), there are currently 13 wine routes in the country: Vinho Verde, Douro and Porto, Dão, Beira Interior, Bairrada, Tejo, Lisbon, Bucelas Carcavelos and Colares, Península de Setubal, Alentejo, Algarve, Region of the Azores and Region of Madeira). These are mainly promoted by the Regional Wine Commissions and the Tourism Regions (regional DMOs). Most of these routes entered operations between 1996 and 1998, with the aim of stimulating the tourism potential of each wine-producing region, with diverse organizational and functional structures, showing different stages of development and dynamism (Cunha et al., 2023; Simões, 2008). The number of adherents has increased significantly in recent years, integrating in many routes different type of members: wine growers’ associations, wine bottlers’ associations, cooperative wineries, individual wineries, wine-producing farms, rural accommodation enterprises, restaurants, specialty stores, museums, among other entities of wine interest (Novais et al., 2009). This integration of diverse actors within a wine region, requiring trust, collaboration, communication and effective partnerships is considered essential for enhanced value-creation and sustainability of wine tourist destinations (Salvado et al., 2023).

### **3.2. The case study**

The Dão and Bairrada wine regions are traditional wine producing territories located in the Center of Portugal (Figure 1). The Dão wine region (DWR) was established in 1908, being the first demarcated region of non-liqueur wines of Portugal (ARVP, 2020). Dão Wine Region promotes, besides the Dão Wine Route (created in 1995), other types of events and festivals which intend to promote the rural area and the actors involved (Barroco & Amaro, 2020). Moreover, in the DWR tourists can also taste local gastronomy, appreciate beautiful landscapes and enjoy the historical, architectural and cultural heritage of its rural areas (Barroco & Amaro, 2020).

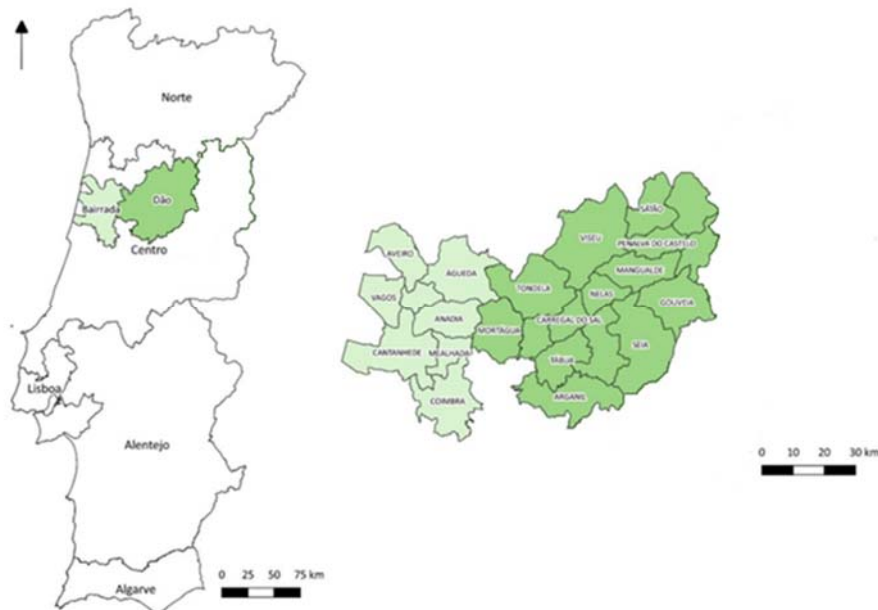


Figure 1. Location of Bairrada and Dão Regions in Portugal. Source: Own elaboration

The Bairrada wine region, on the other hand, was demarcated in 1979 and is known by the quality of its wines, especially the unique, natural sparkling wine, as well as by other tourist attractions, including traditional food (suckling-pig), and thermal spas, providing today a variety of tourist experiences, including but not limited to, food and wine tasting (Carvalho et al., 2021). The Bairrada Wine Route (BWR) was created in 1999, with its BWR branding and signage throughout the region contributing to its visibility and promoting access to participant members and wine-related attractions (Ascensão & Charters, 2004), while the route also includes non-wine related attractions and services, in a wider *terroir* tourism perspective (Kastenholz et al., 2021).

### 3.3. Methodological procedures

For the empirical research, a case study approach was adopted, because it draws, on the one hand, attention to what can be learned about a single case, considering its specificity (Stake, 2005), being, on the other hand, particularly adequate for this exploratory, in-depth investigation. The case-analysis implied interviews and a self-administered questionnaire distributed to wine tourism suppliers (WTS) of the two wine routes. Thereby both a quantitative and qualitative approach is present in the data.

The majority of interviews were held on-line due to the Covid 19-pandemic, although the researchers have also undertaken several personal interviews and engaged in participant observation, during field research in the regions, within a larger 4-years research project. The questionnaire was sent by email to all the WTS that participated in the interview (N = 65), in a period between November 2019 and September 2020, yielding a total of 18 complete responses from both interviews and questionnaires from a universe of 146 members of these Wine Routes. Although not representative of all WTS of the region, responses serve the purpose of identifying management and leadership patterns, especially regarding the indepth qualitative approach, also permitting an exploratory analysis of female management profiles and practices, in comparison to their male colleagues.

In order to identify the main discourse patterns of WT agents, interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and subject to content analysis. In this study, the focus was on the questions related to leadership behaviours and management practices, following the leadership behaviour dimensions proposed by (Behrendt et al., 2017), distinguishing task-oriented and relation-oriented practices.

For methodological procedures, keeping anonymity, respondents of the interviews were identified by numbers (e.g. WTS1, meaning wine tourism supplier n°1). The discourses were subsequently subject to content analysis using NVivo 12. For codification, previously identified key concepts from the literature were used as initial codes, with other codes emerging from the interpretation process. Codes and sub-codes were constantly reviewed for consistency and recoded when necessary (Miles et al., 2018). To assure reliability, two authors coded all narratives together and, when necessary, a third author was consulted to overcome lack of agreement.

The content analysis followed an interpretive perspective, with overlapping content observable and the same comment possibly being coded into more than one category. NVivo provided the frequency of references of categories coded, 'encoding matrix queries' (relations between variables, for example, frequency of categories by gender). Non-parametric statistical analyses (Chi Square and Mann Whitney tests), using SPSS, were additionally applied to analyse data provided by the self-administered questionnaire (personality traits) and to reveal gender differences regarding 1) sample characterization and 2) categories resulted by the content analysis, considering a significance level of 0.05. Finally, results were presented and discussed using examples of narratives extracted from the analysed comments, always protecting the respondent's identity.

## **4. RESULTS**

### **4.1. Sample characterization**

The sample consists of 18 WTS, 11 males and 7 females, i.e. there is a dominance of men (61%) over women in the overall sample. They have an average age of around 50 years, and most present a degree or higher education (see Table 1). The high levels of education amongst rural tourism promoters is indeed common to other studies on rural tourism (e.g. Brandth & Haugen, 2011; Nicolás et al., 2020; Ribeiro & Marques, 2002). The majority are also the owner of the business. Frequently, the business administration is shared and the business was either created or inherited. The staff is mainly composed of men, suggesting therefore a weak weight of women in the wine tourism business in the analysed regions.

To analyse gender differences, Chi-Square Tests were performed regarding some qualitative variables (Route, Education, Function, Business Origin and Gender of Human Resources) and a Mann Whitney test regarding age (ordinal variable). Differences are not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ) for these comparisons between male and female WTS. However, given the small sample size, marginally significant results (slightly above 0.05) may still be considered. Here a gender difference appears as to business origin ( $p = .052$ ), with a trend of men creating WT businesses more than women, who tend to have inherited or acquired the business.

Table 1. Sample characterization.

Sample characteristics	N/ % (Total)	N/ % (Male)	N/% (Female)	p (Chi-Square Test)
<b>Route</b>				
Bairrada	12/66.7	8/ 66.7	4/33.3	.494
Dão	6/33.3	3/50.0	3/50.0	
<b>Education</b>				
Graduated	16/88.9	10/62.5	6/37.5	.732
Ungraduated	2/11.1	1/50	1/50	
<b>Function</b>				
Owner	14/ 77.8	10/71.4	4/28.6	.093
Manager	4/22.2	1/ 25.0	3/75.0	
<b>Business origin</b>				
Created	8/44.4	<b>7/ 85.5</b>	<b>1/12.5</b>	(residuals ±2.1) <b>.052</b>
Inherited	8/44.4	4/50.0	4/50.0	
Acquired	2/11.1	0	2/100	
<b>Human resources</b>				
More men	7/58.3	4/57.1	3/42.9	.332
More women	3/25.0	1/33.3	2/66.7	
Equivalent	2/16.7	2/100	0	
	<i>Mean (SD)</i>			<i>p (Mann Whitney U Test)</i>
Age	51.19 (11.38)	51.45 (11.20)	50.60 (11.33)	.691

Source: Own computation based on data gathered from survey (questionnaires).

Note: statistically significant values are highlighted in bold.

It is further interesting that, although not statistically significant, men tended to be rather owners, while women tended to be rather managers of the business.

## 4.2. Personality Traits

Personality traits are assumed to act as predispositions to display a certain kind of response across certain situations (Caprara & Cervone, 2000), being recognized as important in entrepreneurship (Pato, 2019). Here, they were measured through a set of five items, using a 5 points Likert scale (completely disagree – completely agree).

Table 2 reveals that all personality traits measured obtained relatively high scores, suggesting that WTS tend to be entrepreneurs, with high levels of locus of control and need of achievement. The least strong personality trait in this sample, although still quite present, is self-confidence.

Table 2. Personality Traits.

Answers	Mean (SD)			p (Mann Whitney U Test)
	Total	Male	Female	
What happens to me in life depends more on me...	4.53 (0.62)	4.55 (0.53)	4.50 (0.76)	.884
I need to feel fulfilled	4.47 (0.62)	4.44 (0.73)	4.50 (0.53)	1.000
I value my autonomy	4.41 (0.71)	4.22 (0.83)	<b>4.63 (0.52)</b>	.404
I have an innovative spirit	4.35 (0.61)	4.33 (0.50)	4.38 (0.74)	.961
I like to take risks	4.29 (0.77)	4.22 (0.83)	4.38 (0.74)	.884
I am creative	4.18 (0.73)	4.11 (0.78)	4.25 (0.71)	1.000
I am self-confident	4.17 (0.64)	4.22 (0.44)	4.13 (0.83)	.591

Source: Own computation based on data gathered from survey (questionnaires).

Again, the differences between male and female WTS are not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ), although a slightly more pronounced tendency towards valuation of autonomy is interestingly found amongst female wine tourism leaders. It seems therefore that they have the desire to organize their own affairs (Brandstätter, 1997) and prefer to set their own goals and plans of actions (Baum et al., 2007).

### 4.3. WTS' discourse

In general, the WTS' narratives are mostly focused on Management Practices (81% of the discourse), against discourse regarding leadership behaviors (19%). This may be due to the more numerous facets of specific management behaviours and corresponding categories encountered.

Within Leadership Behaviour, outward-oriented relations (55%) and change-envisioning task orientation (31%) are most relevant issues. Within Management Practices, issues related to Global Sustainability (20%), Communication with Markets (13%) and Strategic Orientation (12%) stand out (see Table 3).

Table 3. Categories and frequencies.

Category	Description	WTS	Number of references
<b>LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR</b>			<b>70</b>
<b>Relations oriented – external</b>	<b>Relations-oriented behavior directed towards individuals external to the team.</b>		<b>30</b>
Client – personalization	Interpersonal relationship with clients marked by personalized service.	8	18
Product quality	Focus on offering quality products.	11	12
<b>Relations oriented – internal</b>	<b>Relations-oriented behavior directed towards individuals within the team.</b>		<b>5</b>
Team – positive	Promotion of positive relationships between team members.	2	4
Team - negative	Perception of negative relationships between team members.	1	1
Tasked oriented – change	Behaviors advocating change, envisioning change, encouraging innovation.	12	17
Tasked oriented – routine	Behaviors like clarifying, planning, monitoring operations and problem solving.	3	3
<b>Attitudes towards wine tourism</b>			<b>15</b>
An important complement, but secondary	The wine tourism is seen as a useful and necessary complement of the business, but with a lesser expression in the same.	5	5
Important to monetize spaces	Wine tourism is seen mainly as a way of making the most of the spaces available in the business.	2	2
Important at a holistic level	The value and importance of wine-making is recognized in a holistic perspective.	8	8
<b>MANAGEMENT PRACTICES</b>			<b>225</b>

<b>Communication with markets</b>	Ways of communicating with customers.		<b>39</b>
Written documents		2	2
Marketing communication		3	3
In person events		10	14
Social networks		13	20
<b>Coping styles facing crisis (e.g., covid)</b>	Ways of dealing with crisis situations, such as COVID.		<b>24</b>
Government dependency		2	3
Marketing		1	1
Passivity		6	6
Proactivity		10	12
Cost reduction		1	1
Prices reduction		1	1
<b>Human resources management</b>			<b>29</b>
Evidence of female management in wine tourism		11	12
Shared management		11	12
Individual management		5	5
<b>Networks Integration</b>	Local/ regional partnerships, international partnerships - bridging and bonding social capital.		<b>33</b>
Collaboration with the wine route and its members		2	3
Collaboration with other entities		9	11
Devaluation of relationship with the wine route		7	9
Recognition of the importance of the route		9	10
<b>Strategic orientation</b>			<b>36</b>
Commitment to training		4	4
Commitment to marketing		4	4
Commitment to international market		9	12
Commitment to national market		5	6
Creating added value		3	5
Looking for certification, prestige, notoriety		5	5
<b>Planning</b>			<b>14</b>
Formal planning		5	5
Informal planning		8	9
<b>Global sustainability</b>			<b>50</b>
<b>Environmental</b>	Concerns with the environment context		<b>25</b>
Intentions	Environmental concerns visible in intentions of change.	4	4
Genuine concern	Genuine concern with environmental sustainability, integrated in business culture.	13	17

Mandatory concern	Concerns about environmental sustainability limited to those imposed by law.	4	4
<b>Economic</b>	Concerns with the economic context	14	21
<b>Social</b>	Concerns with the social context	4	4

Source: Own computation based on data gathered from survey (interviews).

Note: the values in bold refer to the sum of references of the category under analysis

As for Leadership Behaviour, the following excerpts are elucidative of the -external-relations-oriented focus:

*The most important of all is the human resources component. If the tourist is well received, with sympathy and with, with a smile, even if the facilities are not the best in the world, ..., there is always a story to tell, and there is always a memory [to share] (WTS01, female producer, Bairrada).*

*(...) I think it is due to the [personal] dedication (that we distinguish ourselves) in the attempt to create bonds, relationships, even friendships rather than viewing customers as numbers and I think this is important (WTS09, male producer, Bairrada).*

Task-orientation towards change becomes visible in these excerpts:

*(...) to set each day a new goal, create a new manner of reaching out to people, as we need people that makes our product 'flow' (WTS06, female producer, Bairrada)*

As for the content reported in the domain of management, concerns about **sustainability** were expressed, above all, in the form of a genuine concern about environmental sustainability, as observable in the following discourse:

*We have solar panels, we have 55 hectares, we do not buy grapes and we do not use herbicide at all. (...) We have a lower profitability, because we are environmentally conscious. This year, we are still investing in machinery, our biggest investment this year has to do with the environment. We only have electric cars, so we have a very high environmental awareness, I think in fact, it is environmental awareness that drives us. My father now bought some aluminum capsules in Sweden because when we have lunches, we used Nespresso, and now we don't even have Nespresso, we use the metal capsules, they are reusable (WTS05, female producer, Bairrada).*

The **communication with the markets** is dominated by online communication. The following discourse is elucidative of these: We are in all [online platforms], we are on Facebook, we are on Instagram, we are on Twitter, we are on YouTube, but we are very active, I don't know if you saw it, our facebook and our instagram are tools that we use a lot (WTS17, male producer, Dão).

However, face-to-face contact is also emphasized, as observable in the following discourse: *We privilege face-to-face contact (WTS06, female producer, Bairrada); We have tried to go to international fairs (WTS12, male producer, Bairrada).*

#### 4.4. Gender differences in WTS' discourse

The previous pattern is maintained when analyzing female and male WTS isolated. However, men present two important differences in relation to the category 'management practices':

1) The second topic with the greatest narrative coverage is 'strategic orientation', especially the commitment with international markets (instead of 'communicating with markets', which moves to fourth place, in stark contrast to female managers). The

attention to the international market is indeed visible in the following discourse: *I export 80% of what I produce, our main export market is North America, so (...) I am talking about the USA and Canada, precisely* (WTS07, male producer, Bairrada).

2) The theme of ‘active integration in networks’ emerges in third place (compared to fourth place in the female perspective), marked by the devaluation of collaboration with the route stated by the adherents of the Dão route: *It [the route] never [really] existed. It existed for[only] someone to receive money (...)* (WTS17, male producer, Dão).

When observing sub-dimensions of each category, Table 4 shows in terms of ‘leadership behavior’, statistically significant differences in terms of tasked-oriented routines, being more women WTS concerned with the topic: *The perspective is to keep it as it has been unfolding until now (...) Keep the good score we have on Booking (...) and basically it is to continue like this* (WTS 02, female, accommodation unit, Bairrada). The same happens concerning the item “attitudes towards wine tourism”. It is also observed in table 4 more women who observed wine tourism an important, but secondary, complement:

*... for me it [wine tourism] was a complement, because I have, in complement to wine production, I also have events and rooms, that is, I have open accommodation and because wine tourism was an asset and is a complement to the business* (WTS 08, male producer, Bairrada).

**Table 4. Leadership Behaviour gender differences (number of cases).**

Meta-categories	Component behaviours	Male	Female	<i>p</i> (Mann Whitney U Test)
<b>Relations-oriented external</b>	Personalization	5	3	.387
	Product quality	5	6	.783
<b>Relations-oriented internal</b>	Team positive	2	0	.060
	Team negative	1	0	.197
<b>Tasked-oriented change</b>	Change, Innovation	6	6	.732
<b>Tasked-oriented routines</b>	Clarifying, planning, monitoring operations, problem-solving	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>.017</b>
<b>Attitudes towards wine tourism</b>	Important complement, but secondary	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>.036</b>
	Important to monetize space	1	1	.732
	Important at a holistic level	5	3	.066

Source: Own computation based on data gathered from survey (interviews).

Concerning the category ‘management practices’, table 5 reveals statistically significant differences in terms of ‘communication with markets’, particularly in social networks, used more by women than by men, maybe because they notice its importance and its ease of use. Differences were also found in terms of ‘human resources management’, being more women to follow a shared management approach, as observable in the following statement: *We are a team, in total and in administration we are four people* (WTS 06, female producer, Bairrada).

Table 5. Management Practices Differences.

Meta-categories	Component Practises	Male	Female	<i>p</i> (Mann Whitney U Test)
<b>Communication with markets</b>	Written document	1	1	.732
	Marketing	0	3	.280
	In person events	5	5	.387
	<b>Social networks</b>	5	<b>8</b>	<b>.017</b>
<b>Coping styles facing crisis (e.g. covid)</b>	Government dependency	1	1	.231
	Marketing	0	1	.197
	Passivity	2	4	.629
	Proactivity	6	4	.494
	Cost reduction	0	1	.412
<b>Human resources management</b>	Prices reduction	0	1	.197
	Female management	9	4	.783
	<b>Shared management</b>	3	<b>8</b>	<b>.005</b>
	<b>Individual management</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>.005</b>
<b>Networks</b>	With the route and its member	3	6	.629
	With other members	1	1	.732
	Devaluation of networks	5	2	.474
	Recognition of the importance of route	4	5	.629
	Commitment to training	1	3	.605
<b>Strategic orientation</b>	Commitment to marketing	2	2	.605
	Commitment to international market	5	4	.629
	Commitment to national market	4	1	.308
	Creating added value	1	2	.829
	Looking for certification, prestige, notoriety	1	4	.255
<b>Planning</b>	Formal planning	3	2	.952
	Informal planning	4	4	.387
<b>Sustainability</b>	Environmental (mandatory)	2	2	.605
	Social	7	7	.518
	Economic	1	3	.518

Source: Own computation based on data gathered from survey (interviews).

## 5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Despite the increasing interest in promoting women's empowerment through entrepreneurship (Cardella et al., 2020), in a wine industry historically dominated by men, little is still known about how women work in the industry and what roles they might play (Galbreath, 2014). Often, the studies which focus on women in rural tourism,

recognize the activity as essential to promote their economic and social independence (Ballesteros et al., 2014; Duarte & Pereira, 2018; Garcia-Ramon et al., 1995). Moreover, several studies also underline that women bring new, authentic and highly valued dimensions to rural tourism, precisely due to their knowledge, experience and skills, accumulated also through their traditional roles and engagement in the family and local community structures during generations (Koutsou et al., 2009; Yasouri & Kalurazi, 2015), with some evidence revealing their particular role and competences in enhancing the community's well-being, particularly given their versatility, resourcefulness, interpersonal and communication skills (Šikić-Mićanović, 2010). Drawing on a case study approach in the scope of the Twine project, this study makes three important contributions to knowledge concerning women leadership issues in wine tourism.

First, with regard to personality traits, the study reveals that the here interviewed WTS present higher scores of personality traits associated to entrepreneurship, as previously identified in the rural entrepreneurship literature (Pato, 2019). However, the absence of statistically significant differences between men and women is noteworthy, reflecting similar individual potential as entrepreneurs and in leadership positions. If these women often do not assume leadership positions in rural or wine tourism, this should be due to other reasons, not due to lack of leadership capabilities. According to Bessièrè (2014) and Litwin et al. (2019), often cultural and other context variables may hinder women to reach leadership positions. These authors highlight the influence of, for example, gender discrimination within entrepreneurial families or the impact of some public policies (e.g. maternity leaves) as barriers to women's access to top management positions in tourism enterprises. Carvalho et al. (2019) additionally identified male homosocial ties and exclusionary practices often making access of women to top positions in tourism more difficult.

Second, in relation to leadership behavior/practice, the study exposed the dominance of management practice narratives against leadership behavior narratives, probably associated to the more easily recalled numerous facets of concrete management practice, as observed before. Here, sustainability issues apparently deserve particular attention from both male and female WTS. Indeed, Cunha et al. (2020) also identified particular sustainability concerns amongst lifestyle entrepreneurs in rural tourism, reflected in investments in a more natural and biological agriculture and ecologically sound management. However, the questions specifically on sustainability may have induced a social desirability bias in this context, which must be recognised as possible limitation.

Third, regarding gender differences in leadership behavior and management practice, the study reveals the higher importance women attribute to communication with markets, especially online communication. This is in line with Chironi et al.'s results (2012), who reported that women demonstrate a special attention to communication and relationship building, often succeeding in interpreting well the needs and buying habits of consumers. Possibly, in accordance with this apparent increased predisposition to communicate and develop relationships, women seem to be also the ones who prefer a shared management approach in opposition to a more individualistic management style employed by men. These female management and leadership styles may be related to family roles assumed by female entrepreneurs/managers (Bessièrè, 2014), or by a more cooperative profile found for women in tourism, in general (Freund & Hernandez-Maskivker, 2021).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND PATHS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In a market context generally dominated by men, the aforementioned results, lead us to present the following summary conclusions:

- similar to men, also women apparently possess the personality traits emphasized in entrepreneurship literature, and should therefore not be stereotyped as unable to lead tourism companies (Carvalho et al, 2019);
- women appear to be those that follow a shared management as also identified by Chironi et al. (2012), paying more attention to communication with the market and relationship building, which should be particularly valuable within a market increasingly looking for authenticity and personalization (Carvalho et al., 2021). Additionally, the predisposition and skills developed in collaborative leadership approaches should be an important ingredient to more successful route and regional governance approaches, recognized as badly needed to enhance wine tourism destination's potential (Partalidou & Tilkeridou, 2023; Salvado *et al*, 2023), making women in WT management positions a particularly interesting target to stimulate regional WT network development.

Considering these results, the study presents some important implications, mainly in terms of management of the rural wine tourism sector. If male and female rural entrepreneurs are not different in terms of personality traits and leadership predisposition, women and society at large need to recognize their potential as agents of change, contributing to the social and environmental well-being and dynamism of communities (Nicolás et al., 2020). Probably, the lack of financial support and in many cases the discriminatory attitude within the financial sector, appears to inhibit their active role in advancing the development of rural regions (Fhlatharta & Farrell, 2017). In this context, women may be encouraged to be entrepreneurial through particularly designed initiatives of empowerment and promotion of the entrepreneurial spirit (McElwee et al., 2018).

This study also presents limitations, related with the sample characteristics, more specifically its small size, and its restriction to two wine tourism regions in one Portuguese region – Bairrada and Dão in the Central region. An extension of the study to other regions would permit validation of some results or understanding of additional moderating, context-dependent variables. Future studies, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches are needed to deepen the here discussed issues in representative samples. Despite this, this study contributes to show the equal potential of female leadership in wine tourism, while also revealing distinct approaches of female leadership for enhancing this sector, particularly in furthering relational facets of the activity, important for managing human resources, partnership networks and relations with clients. This is particularly important in rural areas and in sectors such as wine tourism, where women tend to have less visibility, despite their potential of co-creating distinct and possibly more dynamic tourism offerings, thereby contributing to deconstruct gender stereotypes, strengthening a more egalitarian society.

## FUNDING

This work is funded by National Funds through the FCT - Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P., within the scope of the project Ref<sup>a</sup> UIDB/00681/2020. Furthermore,

this work was also financially supported by the project TWINE – PTDC/GES-GCE/32259/2017 – POCI- 01–0145-FEDER-032259, funded by FEDER, through COMPETE 2020 – Operational Programme Competitiveness and Internationalisation (POCI) and by national funds (OPTDC/GES-GCE/32259/2017-E), through FCT/MCTES.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the CERNAS Research Centre and the Polytechnic Institute of Viseu for their support.

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