



Barriers to and resilience opportunities for the growth and development of the tourist guiding subsector: a gendered perspective

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Abstract. This study examines barriers to and opportunities for the growth and development of the tourist guiding subsector, specifically focusing on gendered perspectives and their role in building inclusive resilience in the tourism sector. Employing a quantitative approach, data were collected from tourist guides (n=434), while descriptive and inferential statistics were performed to examine the gendered differences in tourist guiding. The study revealed gendered disparities in barriers to training and qualification accessibility, regulatory ease and enforcement, tourist-guiding qualification processing, database development, and subsector transformation efforts among tourist guides. Despite revealing obstacles, the study highlighted emerging access to resilience opportunities. Recommendations include implementing training programmes tailored to women's needs and advocating for policy changes that enhance inclusivity, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and diverse tourism sector. The study contributes to the literature on gendered perspectives and has a societal impact on the empowerment of marginalised groups.

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Contents:

1. Introduction	84
2. Literature review	84
2.1. Theoretical framework.....	84
2.2. Tourist guiding subsector	85
2.3. Gender dynamics in tourist guiding.....	86
2.4. Strategies to promote gender inclusivity for resilience	86
3. Materials and methods	87
4. Results	88
5. Discussion	92
6. Implications	94
7. Conclusion and future research direction	94
Acknowledgement	94
References	94

1. Introduction

The tourist guiding subsector is a critical component of the tourism cycle, influencing visitor experience, satisfaction and behaviour, destination development, and competitiveness (Galí & Camprubí, 2020). The need for guided interpretation in tourist destinations is a determinant of the success of tourism, an experience-based industry (Holloway, 1981; Suryana, 2022), making tourist guides key stakeholders in the tourism sector (van der Merwe, 2016). This is because, in their actual visit, tourists need detailed information about the history, circumstances, and exciting content to understand the destination's uniqueness better. As such, tourist guides act as key frontline players in the tourism industry (Al-Okaily, 2022). They guide visitors through experiences, highlighting key attractions, skilfully blending prepared narratives with spontaneous moments, and creating memorable experiences that foster a positive image of a destination, thereby encouraging repeat visits.

A tourist guide's perception, satisfaction and behavioural intentions influence the quality of the tourist experience (Galí & Camprubí, 2020). As a result, tourist guides can make or break a tour (Nyahunzvi & Njerekai, 2013; Alzghoul et al., 2024). Satisfied tourist guides relay positive destination information to clients, encourage repeat visits, provide positive word-of-mouth commendations, and reduce client complaints (Ariya et al., 2020). A considerable body of research has been conducted on tourist guides, with empirical studies focusing on the role of tourist guides (Güzel et al., 2020; Orabi & Fadel, 2020), their performance (Alazaizeh et al., 2019), and the effect of tour guiding service quality on tourist satisfaction (Kuo et al., 2018). Although these studies underscore the impact of tourist guides on tourist experience satisfaction, which in turn influences the growth of the subsector, they fail to address the barriers that tourist guides encounter that hinder their growth and development, particularly from a gendered perspective. The study conceptualises barriers in the broader sense to capture the structural, systematic and processes that make access difficult, costly and unequal, even if some manage to overcome them.

Women represent approximately 54% of the global tourism workforce (Setiawan, 2023). As a result, their job satisfaction is crucial. Nevertheless, it is commonly argued that women share a common world of inequality in workplaces compared to their male counterparts, who are privileged to find themselves in societies highly regulated by caste and class and patriarchal inequality (Adam,

2014; Hillman & Radel, 2022). The patriarchal set-up of communities allows the domination of males in the workplace. At the same time, women often encounter systemic barriers that limit their economic opportunities and career advancement, affecting their satisfaction and perceptions of the tourism sector. Researchers have documented knowledge about women's participation in tourism for decades (Khan, 2011; Setiawan, 2023). Despite women's contribution to tourism growth, employment opportunities in the tourism industry are highly gendered (Pritchard & Morgan, 2017), with women being underrepresented in the sector and leadership positions (Aleshinloye, 2024). The new paradigm of women's tourism research in growth, development and opportunities has shifted significantly from traditional perspectives that primarily viewed women as passive participants to their active role in leadership as influencers and entrepreneurs (Chamboko-Mpotaringa, 2024b) driving growth and development (Ramesh Babu et al., 2019).

Studies on gendered perspectives have been recognised for their contributions to both literature and practice (Aleshinloye, 2024; Adam, 2014), particularly in enhancing women's participation in tourism, specifically within the tourist guiding subsector. Given the significance of women's roles in tourism (Setiawan, 2023), this paper aims to identify barriers and opportunities for resilience that affect the growth and development of the tourist guiding subsector, while also examining whether gendered differences exist in these barriers and resilience opportunities. Regarding practice, the study serves as a basis for policy development and sustainable practices while having a societal impact on the empowerment of marginalised groups and enhanced community resilience. This study heeds calls by United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for promoting gender equality, empowering women and girls in tourism (SDG5), and contributing to SDG8, which focuses on promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical framework

This study adopts a social justice framework contextualised through gender inclusivity. This framework is deemed pertinent as it addresses intersectional local contexts and structural barriers

(Hernández-González & Espeso-Molinero, 2025) and, consequently, aids in addressing the systemic discrimination and inequalities faced by female tourist guides. A primary means of achieving social justice is ensuring employment inclusivity, equitable access and participation for marginalised communities and people (Bianchi & de Man, 2021). Tourism should serve as a vehicle for social justice (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2016). This includes equal employment opportunities and the quality of work, which can influence growth within the workplace, particularly among women. Moreover, the study adopts this approach as it acknowledges that tourism can be a powerful tool for empowerment and inclusivity.

Through the socio-ecological lens, resilience refers to a system's ability to endure disturbances, adapt to changes, and maintain its core functions and identity (Hall et al., 2024). In the current study context, this definition emphasises the importance of equitable practices that foster collective well-being and support shifts in development paths. The current study views the tourist guiding sector as a system that interacts with environmental, economic, and social factors, such as limited access to training, regulatory issues and crime, which are disturbances that challenge the system's stability (Kapa et al., 2023). Furthermore, the attractive and rapidly expanding nature of South Africa's natural and cultural heritage renders the tourist guiding sector a focal point of interest for entrepreneurs, government entities, and local communities (van der Merwe, 2016). This context underscores the relevance of resilience theory to the study, as it offers a framework for comprehending how the tourist guiding subsector can adapt to industry challenges. Singh (2018) emphasises that socio-ecological resilience is a competency that communities can employ when confronted with difficulties in their socio-ecological systems. The current study acknowledges the capacity of communities, specifically by considering gendered perspectives, to adapt and thrive by social inclusion through resilience-building strategies despite challenges within the tourist guiding subsector.

2.2. Tourist guiding subsector

According to Galí (2022) and Ross (1997), the tourist guiding subsector is one of the most common and accessible occupations in tourism, resulting in increased local involvement. Consequently, the growth of the tour guide profession has led to specialised roles such as nature, culture and

adventure guides and encouraged a more significant focus on developing specific competencies tailored to their activities and interactions with their environments (Suryana, 2022). This study focuses on formal tourist guides. Research on the tourist guiding subsector has predominantly focused on understanding the roles and performance of tourist guides as communicators, interpreters and enhancers of tourist experiences, emphasising the idea that effective guides convey information to tourists and foster a deeper understanding of cultural contexts, which leads to more responsible and resilient tourism practices (Alazaizeh et al., 2019; Yulianda et al., 2023). In their study, Alazaizeh et al. (2019) emphasise the importance of tourist guides' performance in promoting sustainable visitor behaviour at cultural heritage sites. Tourist guides utilise techniques such as storytelling and creating memorable impressions to effectively engage with tourists (Yulianda et al., 2023).

Literature (Kuo et al., 2018) has shown concerns about the inadequate management of tourist guides leading to a lack of professionalism and safety. Most nations impose policies and regulations on tourist-guiding businesses, with formal tourist guides required to be registered and licenced to operate (Xu et al., 2023). In South Africa, the tourist guiding subsector is regulated by the National Department of Tourism, with all tourist guides expected to be certified after completing training and proving theoretical and practical competence to improve industry performance (Kapa et al., 2023). Conversely, informal tourist guides engage in such activities without certificates and licences. Though in different contexts, Nyahunzvi and Njerekai (2013) and Mbatha et al. (2021) unearthed a range of problems in the tourist guiding sector, including certification and licencing, employment and remuneration, training and paucity of monitoring measures. In the same breath, management shortcomings negatively affect the operations and satisfaction of tourist guides, which have an asymmetric effect on tourist satisfaction. Despite South African tourist guiding being categorised into three main genres (adventure, cultural and nature) and guiding areas of operation (site, provincial and national), the challenges faced by the tourist guides often stem from governance, training and licencing issues, resulting in South African tourist guides feeling undervalued (Mbatha et al., 2021; Kapa et al., 2023). The crucial role that tourist guides' attitudes play in shaping tourists' experiences and satisfaction highlights the importance of implementing effective training and management for tourist guides.

2.3. Gender dynamics in tourist guiding

The unequal participation of men and women in tourism dates to the time of industrialisation, when men held dominant roles in society, along with patriarchal beliefs (Fathizadeh et al., 2022), allowing men to travel in search of greener pastures, while women tended to take care of the family. Within the tourist guiding sector, like other tourism sectors, gender roles and stereotypes impact the participation and experiences of women and men (Tegegne et al., 2024). Women are often expected to provide a more personal, emotional, and educational experience than men, while men are often expected to provide factual information. This bias associates leadership and technical roles with men while women are assigned administrative and support roles (Aleshinloye, 2024), leaving women with entry and promotion barriers. Such barriers can lead to unequal access to training and job opportunities and disparities in pay and working conditions. In addition, these barriers limit women's opportunities for career advancement, resulting in gender imbalance within the tourist guiding subsector. This weakens the subsector's resilience as it fails to take full advantage of the diverse perspectives and skills that women bring.

With nations recognising the competitive advantage brought by an inclusive and diverse workforce (Chamboko-Mpotaringa, 2024b), there has been a shift in gender roles caused by women working and becoming breadwinners. Gender-inclusive tourism recognises the importance of involving women in decision-making, enhancing their access to education and skills, promoting entrepreneurship to create a just and equitable society and empowering local communities, especially impoverished women (Bianchi & de Man, 2021). Empowerment opportunities hold the ace in women's liberation for equitably living and the nation's sustainable growth (Aleshinloye, 2024). Consequently, gender-inclusive tourism has altered the dynamics of the tourist guiding subsector.

Noteworthy are the socio-economic implications of tourist guiding on women. Tourist guiding facilitates intergenerational social mobility (Xu et al., 2023). Tourism improves social mobility by creating jobs for women (Saarinen et al., 2014), giving them financial independence and having positive ripple effects on their families and communities (Swart et al., 2023). Owing to the shift in employment from overreliance on traditional industries such as agriculture, tourism may result in better wages for women (Mkini Lugalla et al., 2024). Furthermore,

as women gain more visibility, recognition and leadership within the tourist guiding subsector, it inspires other women and future generations to pursue careers in tourist guiding (Rinaldi & Salerno, 2020), fulfilling most municipalities aspirations to change their labour market and economic models for sustainability (Mantey et al., 2024). The tourist guiding subsector allows women to play a significant role in promoting sustainable practices as they often possess unique insights and approaches to their work (Güzel et al., 2020) and manage the complexities of tourist interactions. This contributes to the industry's overall growth and success and increased revenue.

Researchers have noted that women face challenges as tourist guides (Adam, 2014; Hillman & Radel, 2022). Literature has shown that women have a greater fear of crime (Sypion et al., 2024), possibly because women are more likely to be victims of discrimination, harassment and sexism than men. They often have lower-ranked roles, resulting in lower wages and fewer job opportunities than men. When they get jobs, they often have to work harder to prove their worth, yet they are paid less than their male counterparts. Regarding entrepreneurship, women face limited access to financial support, training and resources necessary for entrepreneurship and growth (Tegegne et al., 2024). In addition, women usually face a "double burden" role in balancing traditional domestic duties and workplace responsibilities. Notwithstanding the challenges, their involvement challenges traditional gender roles and stereotyping, thus forcing companies to create gender-inclusive working environments.

2.4. Strategies to promote gender inclusivity for resilience

There have been conscious efforts to ensure gender equality and inclusivity, but it is occurring slowly. From a human resources studies point of view, tourist guides must provide quality performance (Suryana, 2022). Therefore, it is important to equip tourist guides with the necessary skills and knowledge to engage effectively with tourists (Yulianda et al., 2023). Training helps accumulate explicit knowledge and valuable skills (Mkini Lugalla et al., 2024). Literature (Ünsal Adaca, 2021) has shown that females have higher empathy and emotional adaptability, a critical component for training that requires interpersonal skills, which is important in tourist guiding. Offering mentorship programmes helps to support women in navigating

career advancement and developing leadership skills (Aleshinloye, 2024). Pairing experienced female tourist guides with newcomers helps overcome challenges and build confidence. With the government's involvement, many countries have set up certification and licencing systems, mandating specific qualifications and training for tourist guides (Kapa et al., 2023). These certification and licencing systems incorporate standards that promote gender inclusivity and equal opportunities to ensure that all tourist guides, regardless of gender, meet the same criteria, thus levelling the playing field (Mbatha et al., 2021).

3. Materials and methods

The study area is South Africa, which is a tourism hotspot located in the southern tip of Africa and is characterised by increasing tourist arrivals, a rich cultural landscape, adventure opportunities, and natural attractions (Matiza & Slabbert, 2020; Mbatha et al., 2021; Chamboko-Mpotaringa, 2024a). It is important to note that, with the diverse tourism offerings that South Africa offers across its nine provinces, one way to explore the country is to take guided tours, which are available all year round. This study aimed to examine the barriers to and opportunities for the growth and development of the tourist guiding subsector, explicitly focusing on gendered perspectives and their role in building inclusive resilience in the tourism sector. To achieve this, the researchers assumed two philosophical stances: an ontological view that objective reality can be understood through empirical observation and an epistemological view where the researchers assert that knowledge is derived from measurable data (Rady et al., 2022). Thus, the study adopted a positivist paradigm to uncover objective truths about the tourist guiding subsector using quantifiable data and statistical analysis.

Employing a quantitative research design and using convenience sampling, the empirical data were collected from registered tourist guides. Utilising the sample size calculation, with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, it was determined that a total of 385 responses was adequate for the study. The justification for employing an unlimited population model was based on the challenges associated with the estimation of the number of registered tourist guides. Although the National and Provincial Registrars provided estimated data, the presence of expired permits and pending renewals complicated the accurate determination

of the actual number of registered tourist guides in South Africa. Empirical data were collected using a structured questionnaire, soliciting information related to barriers to growth and development in the tourist guiding subsector and access to resilience opportunities, constructed from a comprehensive literature review (Ross, 1997; Kuo et al., 2018; Orabi & Fadel, 2020; Mbatha et al., 2021; Kapa et al., 2023). Overall, the survey contained 43 items on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. The survey also examined the respondents' demographic and tourist guiding profiles. Though not directly focusing on the study's objectives, demographic and tourist guiding profiling questions are nonetheless important, as they contribute towards successful tourist guiding strategies development for resilience.

As this was a national study, the National and Provincial Registrars of Tourist Guides were first approached to obtain contact details of the registered tourist guides in South Africa. Unsurprisingly, the database revealed a low proportion of registered female tourist guides as compared to male registered tourist guides, possibly because of the skewed labour force participation rate in the larger South African population, with more males (45.7%) in the working-age population participating in employment as compared to females (36.5%) (Statistics South Africa, 2025). Potential respondents were selected based on convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Tourist guides familiar with the researchers helped by acting as gatekeepers to other registered tourist guides (Al-Okaily, 2022). The surveys were distributed through various methods such as self-administration at key tourism attractions in the various provinces, emails, and a survey link was posted on Tourism Update (an online platform that provides daily updates on Southern and East African Tourism news) encouraging members of the population concerned to complete the survey. The survey link was designed to prevent duplication by allowing only one survey completion per participant. The data were examined for missing values, outliers and distribution of all variables to reduce systematic errors, using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Incomplete questionnaires were eliminated from the study. The total sample size was 434, with a diverse profile to ensure multi-contextual realities (Mik-Meyer, 2020), deemed sufficient for the study. Descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, chi-square, factor analysis and ANOVA were performed to achieve the study objectives.

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

Variables		(n=434, in %)
Gender	Female	25.2
	Male	74.8
Age	18-24 years	3.7
	25-34 years	16.4
	35-44 years	29.7
	45-54 years	25.8
	55-65 years	17.3
	65 years or above	7.1
Highest academic qualification	No formal qualification	3.0
	Matric certificate*	21.2
	National certificate/diploma	29.0
	Undergraduate degree	32.3
	Postgraduate degree	13.4
	Other	1.1

Notes: *A matric certificate, or National Senior Certificate (NSC), is awarded in South Africa to students who have successfully completed Grade 12, signifying the end of twelve years of schooling and is necessary for further education, learnerships, and certain job opportunities.

4. Results

Profile of the sample

Most respondents were male (74.8%) compared to 25.2% females. Regarding age, respondents in the category 35–44 (29.7%) dominated, as opposed to those in the category 18–24 (3.7%), who were least represented. Most respondents had an undergraduate degree (32.3%) or a national certificate/diploma (29.0%), as shown in Table 1.

Table 2 shows the tourist guiding participation profile regarding province of operation, classification of operation, guiding category and guiding qualifications.

The province accounting for the highest percentage of female tourist guides (34.5%) is the Western Cape, whereas the province where the highest percentage of males (36.4%) operate is the Gauteng province. Males concentrate their activity on operating as site tourist guides (28.1%) slightly more than females (23.4%). The most popular guiding category for males (40.1%) is provincial tourist guide, whereas equal percentages of females operate as provincial (38.3%) or national tourist guides (38.3%). Almost half (50.2%) of the male respondents indicated they operate in the nature tourist guiding category, while a lesser percentage

(40.2%) of their female counterparts indicated operating in the same category. On the other hand, 61.5% of the males operate in the culture category, whereas a slightly larger proportion (68.2%) of their female counterparts operate in the same category. Also, whereas only 18.9% of the male tourist guides indicated operating in the adventure category, a smaller proportion of females (15%) indicated operating in the same category. Most tourist guides indicated having a National Certificate in Tourism Guiding, with more males (88.2%) than their female counterparts (86.8%).

Barriers to growth and development

To identify the underlying factors for barriers to growth and development, factor analysis was conducted using 43 variables. Firstly, the results showed Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.916 for all the items under consideration, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and reliability. Multicollinearity issues were assessed through correlation analysis, variance inflation factors (VIF) and tolerance (T) thresholds. The obtained VIF threshold ranged from 1.4 to 2.6, below 5, while the obtained tolerance values ranged from 0.313 to 0.715, indicating the absence of multicollinearity (Assaf & Tsionas, 2021). The correlation matrix on inspection revealed

Table 2. Gendered tourist guiding profile of tourist guides

Variables		Males (%)	Females (%)
Province of operation	Gauteng	36.4	25.5
	Western Cape	15.2	34.5
	Mpumalanga	18.8	10.9
	Limpopo	12.7	5.5
	Northern Cape	6.1	18.2
	Free State	4.8	3.6
	KwaZulu Natal	2.4	1.8
	Eastern Cape	3.0	0.0
	North West	0.6	0.0
<i>Total</i>		<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Tourist guiding operations	Site guide	28.1	23.4
	Provincial guide	40.1	38.3
	National guide	31.8	38.3
<i>Total</i>		<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
*Tourist guiding category	Nature	50.2	40.2
	Culture	61.5	68.2
	Adventure	18.9	15.0
Tourist guiding qualifications	National Certificate in Tourism Guiding	88.2	86.8

Notes: *Guides could select multiple categories within the "tourist guiding category"; hence, percentages do not tally to 100 vertically; only "yes" responses are shown.

coefficients below 0.9, indicating acceptable correlations. The KMO index is 0.857, and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < .001$), communality after extraction exceeded 0.5, the determinant of the R-matrix exceeded 0.00001, showing sampling adequacy and the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Factors were extracted based on their eigenvalues exceeding one and the factor loading being greater than 0.3 (Hair et al., 1998). As shown in Table 3, the factor model retained four factors.

The study identified four domains: training and qualification accessibility challenges (domain 1), regulatory ease and enforcement (domain 2), tourist-guiding qualification processing delays and cost barriers (domain 3) and database development and subsector transformation efforts (domain 4). The factor model accounted for 64.51% of the variance, and Cronbach's alpha values of the extracted factors indicated moderate to good internal consistency (ranging from 0.64 to 0.88). "The difficulty of tourist guiding qualifications training content" has the highest factor loading (0.74) among variables in domain 1, whereas the enforcement variable "all tourist guides must be registered" has the highest

factor loading (0.576) in domain 2. In domain 3, "renewing registrations is difficult for tourist guides to understand" has the highest factor loading (0.621), and, in domain 4, "Qualification and registration requirements to become a tourist guide are easy to understand" (0.582) has the highest factor loadings.

Gendered perspectives variations of barriers to growth and development among the tourist guides: One-way ANOVA

Table 4 reports the results of a one-way ANOVA test comparing the variations in gendered perspectives of barriers to growth and development among tourist guides for the four identified factors from factor analysis.

Findings show significant effects for the difficulty of tourist guiding qualifications training content ($F=7.765$, $p=0.002$), inadequate access to training and education ($F=4.399$, $p=0.005$), insufficient finances for registration or renewal ($F=4.284$, $p=0.005$), cost of obtaining relevant tourist guiding qualifications ($F=9.284$, $p<0.001$), resistance to changing requirements for registration by current

Table 3. Results of the factor analysis on tourist guides' perceptions of the barriers to the growth and development of the tourist guiding subsector

	Factor loadings			
	1	2	3	4
Factor 1: Training and qualification accessibility challenges (Cronbach's Alpha=0.881)				
Difficulty of tourist guiding qualifications training content	0.737			
Regulation and licensing requirements of being a tourist guide	0.649			
Fast pace of facilitators during training	0.622			
Inadequate access to training and education (no nearby facilities or only in-person courses)	0.618			
Qualification requirements	0.607			
Sufficient finances for registration or renewal	0.605			
Cost of obtaining relevant tourist guiding qualifications	0.602			
Resistance to changing requirements for registration by current tourist guides	0.598			
Time-consuming nature of renewing registrations	0.596			
Requirements for tourist guide registration	0.595			
Ongoing historical exclusion of previously disadvantaged people	0.592			
Cost of training and education	0.577			
Factor 2: Regulatory ease and enforcement (Cronbach's Alpha=0.635)				
All tourist guides must be registered.		0.576		
Illegal tourist guides threaten the tourism subsector, the safety of tourists and the financial sustainability of registered tourist guides.		0.517		
There is a need to create and maintain a tourist guide database.		0.465		
High crime rates pose a threat to all tourist guides.		0.358		
High crime rates in the country serve as a deterrent for women and other previously disadvantaged groups becoming tourist guides.		0.338		
Factor 3: Tourist-guiding qualification processing delays and cost barriers (Cronbach's Alpha=0.710)				
Registration renewal is difficult for tourist guides to understand.			0.621	
Delays in issuing the qualification delay the registration process.			0.403	
The tourist-guiding registration process is complex.			0.320	
The amount of experience that a tourist guide has should be recognised in the process of recognised prior learning (RPL), with certain requirements being waived in lieu of evidenced experience.			0.321	
Tourist guides have not yet financially recovered from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.			0.309	
The registration process for the tourist-guiding qualification takes too long.			0.375	
Factor 4: Database development and subsector transformation efforts (Cronbach's Alpha=0.670)				
Qualification and registration requirements to become a tourist guide are easy to understand.				0.582
Qualification and registration requirements to become a tourist guide are easy to meet and obtain.				0.564
It is uncomplicated and straightforward to register/renew registration at the provincial registrar's guide office.				0.483
Governing body efforts must be exerted to transform the tourist guide subsector.				0.398
Transformation of the tourist guide subsector affects black South African participation.				0.352

Source: own elaboration based on CAWI survey (n=500)

Table 4. Results of one-way ANOVA testing the variations in gendered perspectives of barriers to growth and development among tourist guides

Domain structures	Males (n=317)		Females (n=107)		F	Sig. P
	Mean*	Std. Dev.	Mean*	Std. Dev.		
Factor 1 (training and qualification accessibility challenges)						
Difficulty of tourist guiding qualifications training content	3.34	1.182	2.88	1.385	7.765	0.002
Regulation and licensing requirements of being a tourist guide	3.05	1.501	2.93	1.471	1.237	0.296
Fast pace of facilitators during training	3.16	1.121	3.12	1.344	1.302	0.273
Inadequate access to training and education (no nearby facilities or only in-person courses)	3.70	1.220	3.50	1.216	4.399	0.005
Qualification requirements	3.09	1.407	3.00	1.408	0.500	0.683
Insufficient finances for registration or renewal	3.54	1.192	3.31	1.390	4.284	0.005
Cost of obtaining relevant tourist guiding qualifications	3.78	1.162	3.68	1.162	9.284	<0.001
Resistance to changing requirements for registration by current tourist guides	3.26	1.163	3.23	1.202	3.711	0.012
Time-consuming nature of renewing registrations	3.60	1.312	3.61	1.250	3.869	0.009
Requirements for tourist guide registration	3.08	1.342	2.89	1.261	1.356	0.256
Ongoing historical exclusion of previously disadvantaged people	3.43	1.380	3.10	1.352	2.103	0.99
Cost of training and education	3.84	1.131	3.76	1.258	3.681	0.012
Factor 2: regulatory ease and enforcement						
High crime rates in the country serve as a deterrent for women and other previously disadvantaged groups becoming tourist guides.	3.82	1.041	3.89	1.276	9.326	<0.001
All tourist guides must be registered.	4.45	0.876	4.43	0.933	6.399	<0.001
Illegal tourist guides threaten the tourism subsector, the safety of tourists and the financial sustainability of registered tourist guides.	4.31	0.987	4.28	1.164	6.898	<0.001
There is a need to create and maintain a tourist guide database.	4.42	0.714	4.16	0.933	7.032	<0.001
High crime rates pose a threat to all tourist guides.	4.21	0.985	4.27	1.069	7.008	<0.001
Factor 3: tourist-guiding qualification processing delays and cost barriers						
Renewing registrations is difficult for tourist guides to understand.	3.44	1.334	3.20	1.321	4.070	0.007
The tourist-guiding registration process is complex.	3.47	1.160	3.33	1.257	2.560	0.055
The amount of experience that a tourist guide has should be recognised in the process of recognised prior learning (rpl), with certain requirements being waived in lieu of evidenced experience.	4.08	0.884	3.97	1.014	7.925	<0.001
Tourist guides have not yet financially recovered from the effects of the covid-19 pandemic.	4.09	1.029	4.26	0.904	14.249	<0.001
Delays in issuing the tourist-guiding qualification cause delays in the registration process.	4.01	1.064	3.93	1.105	4.906	0.002
The registration process for the tourist-guiding qualification takes too long.	3.74	1.214	3.65	1.252	6.871	<0.001
Factor 4: database development and subsector transformation efforts						
Governing body efforts must be exerted to transform the tourist guide subsector.	3.15	1.208	3.18	1.242	1.573	0.195
Transformation of the tourist guide subsector affects black south african participation.	3.62	1.089	3.61	1.079	5.341	0.001
Qualification and registration requirements to become a tourist guide are easy to understand.	3.65	1.103	3.59	1.046	3.376	0.018
Qualification and registration requirements to become a tourist guide are easy to meet and obtain.	3.54	1.092	3.44	1.175	2.452	0.63
It is uncomplicated and straightforward to register/renew registration at the provincial registrar's guide office.	3.36	1.313	3.18	1.250	3.179	0.024

Notes: *Mean scores based on a 5-point Likert scale where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree

tourist guides ($F=3.711$, $p=0.012$), time-consuming nature of renewing registrations ($F=3.869$, $p=0.009$) and cost of training and education ($F=3.681$, $p=0.012$). The highest mean scores for males were observed for the cost of training and education, cost of obtaining relevant tourist guiding qualifications and inadequate access to training and education ($M=3.84$, $M=3.78$ and $M=3.70$, respectively), while regulation and licensing requirements of being a tourist guide had the lowest mean score ($M=3.05$). For females, the highest mean scores were observed for the cost of training and education ($M=3.76$), the cost of obtaining relevant tourist guiding qualifications ($M=3.68$) and the time-consuming nature of renewing registrations ($M=3.61$). In contrast, the difficulty of tourist guiding qualifications training content ($M=2.88$) recorded the lowest mean score.

Findings show significant effects for all identified regulatory ease and enforcement variables ($p<0.001$). "All tourist guides must be registered" had the highest mean score, with males ($M=4.45$) scoring it higher than females ($M=4.43$). Similarly, significant effects were observed for tourist-guiding qualification processing delays and cost barriers faced by tourist guides variables ($p<0.05$), except for the complex tourist-guiding registration process, where a significant effect could not be established ($p=0.055$).

Regarding database development and subsector transformation efforts, significant effects were observed for the transformation of the tourist guide subsector affects black South African participation ($F=5.341$, $p=0.00$), qualification and registration requirements to become a tourist guide are easy to understand ($F=3.376$, $p=0.018$), and it is uncomplicated and straightforward to register or renew registration at the provincial registrar's guide office ($F=3.179$, $p=0.024$). The highest mean score was for "qualification and registration requirements to become a tourist guide are easy to understand" ($M=3.65$) for males, while females scored "transformation of the tourist guide subsector affects black South African participation" ($M=3.61$) the highest.

Gender disparities in access to resilience opportunities

Chi-square tests were performed to determine whether there is a significant association between gender and the likelihood of having access to or experiencing resilience opportunities for resilience.

The results of the chi-square tests show significant relationships for the variables: information sessions

with prospective guides in communities ($\chi^2=24.036$, $p<0.001$), providing a more stable base income for tourist guides ($\chi^2=11.994$, $p=0.007$), ensuring that the working conditions of tourist guides are decent ($\chi^2=8.763$, $p=0.033$) and incentivising the upskilling of tourist guides ($\chi^2=21.333$, $p<0.001$) among female and male tourist guides. On the other hand, significant relationships could not be established for the variables: subsidised or funded qualifications ($\chi^2=1.262$, $p=0.738$), assistance with the completion of administration, registration or renewals ($\chi^2=1.020$, $p=0.796$) and creating traineeships for new tourist guides ($\chi^2=3.536$, $p=0.316$). Similarly, no significant relationships could be established for establishing partnerships with the private sector to facilitate access to guides ($\chi^2=2.856$, $p=0.414$) and incentivising seasoned tourist guides and companies' participation in the subsector through mentorship ($\chi^2=0.657$, $p=0.883$).

5. Discussion

An analysis of province of operation, tourist guiding categories, operations and qualifications reveals gendered differences influenced by socio-cultural factors that shape career paths. Western Cape province accounts for more female guides than any other province, possibly due to the lower crime rates reported in the province (specifically for murder, sexual offences, attempted murder, assault and common robbery), as compared to those reported in the Gauteng province, which is dominated by male tourist guides (Crime Registrar, 2024). Sypion et al. (2024) have shown fear of crime disparities among males and females, justifying women's preference to operate in lower-crime-rate zones. Female tourist guides predominantly engage in cultural guiding, while males dominate in nature guiding. Adventure guiding is less common for both genders, though slightly higher among males. This trend may reflect traditional beliefs linking masculinity to physical outdoor work (Charway & Strandbu, 2024), further alluding to common African countries' cultural norms that confine women to indoor activities, idealising them as home-keepers (Adam, 2014). Women's involvement in cultural guiding aligns with gendered views of nurturing and communicative roles, correlating with the opinion of Adam (2014). Although women are equally represented as provincial and national guides, men dominate as provincial guides. These findings align with Aleshinloye (2024), who notes that certain activities are socially assigned to men. Additionally, slightly higher qualifications among

males highlight historical gender disparities in access to training and development opportunities (Tegegne et al., 2024).

Four domains were identified regarding tourist guides' perceptions of the barriers to the growth and development of the tourist guiding subsector: training and qualification accessibility challenges, regulatory ease and enforcement, tourist-guiding qualification processing delays and cost barriers, and database development and subsector transformation efforts, thus confirming findings of previous studies (Xu et al., 2023). The present study unveils barriers to the growth and development of the tourist guiding subsector from a gendered perspective. Males reported higher mean scores for training and qualification accessibility challenges, indicating either genuine external barriers experienced or differing perceptions of difficulty when compared to their female counterparts, who reported lower mean scores. Arguably, females' lower mean scores may indicate stronger adaptability to training and qualification accessibility challenges or differences in expectations, as shaped by prior experiences and support systems, giving credence to similar assertions in the literature (Ünsal Adaca, 2021). Additionally, females rated the time-consuming nature of renewing registrations higher than males, revealing that females find the time-consuming nature of renewing registrations more challenging than males. While these findings may reflect genuine external barriers such as inflexible administrative issues that do not accommodate domestic responsibilities, they may also reflect differing sensitivities to time constraints, possibly shaped by responsibilities outside work and gendered roles (Mooney, 2020). These findings highlight that gendered insights from self-reported data can capture both perceived and actual realities, showing the complexity of barriers within the tourist guiding sector and reinforcing the need for inclusive, context-aware policy interventions.

Both male and female tourist guides rated regulatory ease and enforcement barriers highly. Simplifying requirements and administrative procedures facilitates entry into the tourist guiding profession, thus promoting greater inclusivity of tourist guides. Females rated the deterrent effects of high crime rates more highly than males. These findings highlight females' heightened perceptions regarding safety. Similarly to previous studies, these findings emphasise females' risks and concerns (Hillman & Radel, 2022), correlating with the study findings on women's dominant province of operation. Female tourist guides reported frustrations with financial challenges brought on by the COVID-19

pandemic more highly than their male counterparts. These findings show a prolonged financial recovery, which could make it harder for females to pay registration and renewal fees, a finding supported by the works of Fathizadeh et al. (2022), who showed that lack of finance and safety concerns affect female community participation in tourism.

The significant relationships between variables, such as information sessions with prospective guides in communities and providing a more stable base income for tourist guides, are consistent with Mbatha et al. (2021). Ensuring that the working conditions of tourist guides are decent and incentivising the upskilling of tourist guides indicate resilience opportunities among female and male tourist guides in the tourist guiding subsector. These findings support earlier findings aimed at enhancing tourism-related networks through the development and maintenance of positive relationships (Al-Okaily, 2022), providing a more stable base income for tourist guides (Mbatha et al., 2021), ensuring decent working conditions for tourist guides (Hwang & Lee, 2019), and incentivising the upskilling of tourist guides (Ross, 1997). Collectively, these measures point to resilience opportunities within the tourist guiding sub-sector, particularly for women. Consequently, for tourist guides to provide excellent service delivery, they must have work satisfaction, which can be achieved through the significantly identified opportunities. Consequently, the study highlights strategies to overcome barriers to growth and build resilience, specifically for females in a male-dominated field.

The frameworks underpinning the study have been useful in examining the barriers and opportunities to the growth and development of the tourist guiding subsector from a gendered perspective and their role in building inclusive resilience in the tourism sector. Firstly, drawing upon the social justice framework, the study highlighted the importance of equity and inclusion in the tourism industry, correlating with Aleshinloye (2024). Secondly, the study addressed systemic issues contributing to gender disparities and suggests equal opportunities for all tourist guides, regardless of gender, to encourage the development of policies that promote a fair and just working environment (Ünsal Adaca, 2021). Thirdly, the study resonates with the concept of resilience (Hall et al., 2024), which describes resilience through a socio-ecological lens and as a system's ability to endure disturbances, adapt to changes, and maintain its core functions and identity by viewing the tourist guiding subsector as a system.

6. Implications

Regarding policy and other pragmatic implications, policymakers, business owners and community members should consider tourist-guiding employment as a way forward for residents in tourism destinations for social mobility. In doing so, several critical considerations should be noted. First, business owners and policymakers should utilise the principles of social justice and create targeted policies that promote gender equity and inclusivity and support the empowerment of underrepresented groups. The findings indicated lower participation of females as tourist guides and in the different tourist guiding operations and categories. Secondly, despite a high number of female tourist guides indicating having a National Certificate in Tourism Guiding, there remains a need to curb registration and qualification challenges faced by tourist guides. This implies the need to simplify training content and revise the regulatory framework to enhance accessibility and comprehension for all genders. As a result, tourism organisations should develop training programmes that consider gender-specific barriers. It is clear from the study that implementing initiatives such as scholarships and subsidised training courses helps to alleviate financial barriers and improve accessibility for all tourist guides. Regulatory requirements serve as essential mechanisms for maintaining industry standards and safeguarding the interests of tourist guides while ensuring equal and inclusive participation of both female and male tourist guides. As such, the study calls for the government's involvement, which can lead to the enforcement of anti-discrimination policies, further supporting a more diverse and resilient workforce. This has an implication for policymakers, implying that they should enforce adherence to foster a regulatory environment that promotes safety, professionalism and sustainability within the tourist guiding profession.

Regarding resilience opportunities, the findings imply that tourism stakeholders should establish support networks, which facilitate knowledge sharing and solidarity for female guides and provide mentorship and resources needed for resilience. Also, implementing gender-inclusive practices in the tourist guiding subsector enhances the subsector's resilience by tapping into the broader and diverse pool of talent and perspectives. If the subsector encourages equal participation and representation in leadership roles, it promotes innovation, strengthening the industry's ability to adapt to changing market demands. This implies the approach can benefit women and enrich the

tourism sector by creating a resilient, sustainable and dynamic environment for growth.

7. Conclusion and future research direction

The tourist guiding subsector is characterised by gendered challenges, leading to several conclusions. Gendered insights from self-reported data can capture both perceived and actual realities. Female tourist guides exhibit a greater awareness of safety and security concerns compared to their male counterparts, often favouring operating in areas characterised by low crime rates. Furthermore, they face heightened barriers, such as the time-consuming nature of renewing registrations and financial challenges, possibly because they are genuine external barriers experienced or differing perceptions of difficulty. Failure to address these barriers could hinder the growth and resilience of the subsector. The study provided insights into how gender dynamics shape the growth and development of the tourist guiding subsector and also offers opportunities for resilience. The barriers that have been identified in South Africa are not unique. These findings can be used as a roadmap for other destinations. The study was limited to quantitative data collected from registered tourist guides. Despite this, the analysis carried out in this study is useful to establish foundations for policy development and pave the way for future research. Future researchers can include qualitative methods such as interviews to gain more significant insights and investigate from policymakers' perspectives.

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