Management self-perception of Iranian women managers in tourism amidst social change

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the convergence of self-perception, tourism management, and social movements among Iranian women. This case study centers on Iranian women's transforming self-perception as tourism managers amidst the country's recent social movement, internationally known by "Women, Life, Freedom", revolving around women's rights. Qualitative methods were employed to gain deep insights into their approaches to shaping their managerial self-perception. Findings reveal that this social movement has favorably influenced respondents' managerial self-perception, increasing flexibility, compassion, self-awareness, and confidence, while the political upheaval has adversely affected commitment to career. In the aftermath of the recent movement, the interviewees have adopted an increasingly inclusive and less sexist language when discussing themselves and other women, suggesting a promising avenue for future research. This article contributes valuable data to the gender discourse in tourism management and leadership research, and advocates for proactive measures aimed at aiding women managers navigate uncertainties arising from external socio-political dynamics.

1. Introduction

The existing academic literature within tourism research falls short in adequately addressing tourism managers' self-perceptions. Understanding the complex elements of a manager's self-perception becomes paramount in the dynamic landscape of organizational management and leadership literature (Jodar i Solà et al., 2016; Van Velsor et al., 1993; Yammarino & Atwater, 1993). The role of management directly impacts employee well-being, organizational atmosphere, and adaptability to change (Luthans & Peterson, 2002; Ritchie, 2004) and a manager's self-perception can influence their performance and success (Yammarino & Atwater, 1993). As the tourism industry undergoes continuous evolution, the role of managers becomes increasingly critical in navigating complexities and ensuring sustainable success (Doswell, 2009; Peters, 2005; Ritchie, 2004). Managers not only oversee seamless operations, foster innovation, and enhance customer experiences but also grapple with industry-specific challenges, demanding a nuanced comprehension of their self-perception (Eide et al., 2017; Laws et al., 2007). Hence, a deeper understanding of managerial self-perception enables organizations to create more effective leadership development programs, foster positive workplace environments, and ultimately drive better business outcomes (Gentry et al., 2008; John & Robins, 1994).

Gender is an additional overlooked dimension in tourism management research (Carvalho et al., 2019; Gibson, 2001; Pritchard, 2018), and the insufficient exploration of self-perception in the field leads to a corresponding dearth of research in the domain of gendered self-perception within tourism management. Gender, as a crucial determinant, shapes societal expectations, norms, and stereotypes, exerting a profound influence on individuals' self-perceptions and external perceptions of them (Herbst, 2020; Smyth et al., 2018). Research focused on gendered self-perception provides valuable insights into the distinctive challenges and opportunities faced by individuals, particularly women, in leadership capacities (Chandra & Loosemore, 2004; Fischlmayr, 2002; Herbst, 2020). This scholarly inquiry facilitates an understanding of the intersection between societal expectations, gender dynamics, and the responsibilities inherent in managerial roles. The exploration of self-perception through the gendered lens in tourism management enables the discernment of potential biases, barriers, or imbalances that women in tourism leadership may experience throughout their professional trajectories (Fischlmayr, 2002). This knowledge holds paramount importance in fostering inclusive and equitable environments, wherein diverse perspectives contribute substantively to the efficacy of decision-

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making and women leadership within the evolving environment of the tourism industry.

In response to these considerations, which constitute the main gaps in the research, this article aims to analyze how Iranian women tourism managers perceive themselves and their management skills, and whether the recent Social Movement[1] has influenced their self-perception regarding management qualities and skills. Social movements are primarily driven by interconnected actors with shared collective identities who challenge contentious social norms, policies, or power structures, aiming to foster a more equitable and fair society (Diani, 1992; Johnston, 2014). Therefore Iran's "Women, Life, Freedom" movement, which highlights women's rights and gender discrimination in the country, is referred to as the "Social Movement" in this research. This term was also the most frequently used by the interviewees of this study.

Iran was selected based on its distinctive socio-cultural context (Hosseini et al., 2023; Siyamiyan Gorji et al., 2021), where women's and human rights conditions present noteworthy challenges. In addition to this, very few academic studies linked to tourism and self-perception, such as Setiyorini et al. 's work on Indonesian students' self-perception and career image (Setiyorini et al., 2015), have taken place in developing countries. Therefore, the authors chose Iran as a representative case of developing countries. Iran gained global attention following the tragic death of a young girl in September 2022, sparking a series of protests and a socio-political movement (Deaton et al., 2022). Before finalizing the research in September 2022, a notable Social Movement began in Iran under the main slogan "Women, Life, Freedom". This Movement reflected in globally recognized media outlets, portrayed bold images of Iranian women. Given the potential influence of such social and political upheavals on women (Abdelzaher & Abdelzaher, 2019; Castle et al., 2020; Hussain & Haj-Salem, 2022; Suk et al., 2019) and the reality of societal changes caused by social Movements (Levy & Mattsson, 2023), the authors decided to include the evolution of Iranian women's self-perception as tourism managers before and after the Social Movement in the research.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical perspectives on self-perception and its formation

Self-perception is a psychological concept and is defined as how individuals interpret their own attitudes and internal states (Bem, 1967). This dynamic process can change over time and is shaped by various internal and external factors (Morina, 2021). Hence, social changes can potentially serve as influential factors impacting an individual's self-perception. Festinger's Social Comparison (Festinger, 1954) implies that individuals develop a concept of self by evaluating their abilities and beliefs and comparing themselves to others in their social group (Morina, 2021). Social comparison can be upward (i.e. comparing oneself to superiors) or downward (i.e. comparing oneself to inferiors), with more tendency to imply upward comparison, which influences individuals' self-esteem and self-evaluation (Gerber et al., 2018). Furthermore, individuals might use a selective approach to self-perception, focusing on positive attributes and ignoring negative ones to maintain a positive self-perception (Sedikides & Strube, 1997). The presence of diverse theories surrounding this subject serves to accentuate the likelihood of variations among individuals in their chosen approaches to defining their self-perception.

Festinger (1962) proposed the Cognitive Dissonance theory, which

suggests that when individuals are faced with information or behaviors that conflict with their existing beliefs or values, they experience a state of discomfort or dissonance. This discomfort motivates individuals to resolve the inconsistency by changing their beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors. Perceiving oneself is a complex process and is influenced by internal and external factors such as emotions, past experiences, and social norms. It therefore plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's self-concept and can affect their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in various contexts (Bem, 1972). Moreover, Fazio (1987) reflects on the foundational concepts and evolution of self-perception theory. Emphasizing the formation of attitudes, the scholar explores how individuals infer their attitudes from their own behaviors and the contextual settings in which these behaviors occur.

Following the self-perception studies in the academic domain of Human Resources, concepts such as "self-perception accuracy" through "self/other ratings" began emerging towards the end of the 20th century. In 1993, Yammarino and Atwater highlighted the accuracy of individuals' self-perceptions and their significance in the context of human resource management. They concluded that improved performance and efficiency are positively correlated with the accuracy of someone's self-perception, which emphasizes the importance of self-perception in the context of the workforce. Van Velsor et al. (1993) explored the relationship between membership in a self-rater agreement group (i.e. underraters, accurate raters, overraters) and self-ratings, others' evaluations of self-awareness, and leadership effectiveness. Contrary to common assumptions, the research challenges the belief that women are more prone to underrate their leadership skills and claims that women who get to the "top" successfully are in fact the confident ones. Furthermore, it identifies gender differences in rated self-awareness, particularly the subcomponent of knowledge of self. Offering a comprehensive overview of gender dynamics within management, Powell's, 1990 analysis of gendered management literature presents progressive perspectives on the subject. Some of the findings suggest that any distinctions between men and women in management if they exist at all, are insignificant.

2.2. Self-perception in management

In the management literature, self-perception is crucial for effective leadership, job satisfaction, and performance. Several studies have highlighted the importance of self-perception in managerial roles, with findings indicating that self-perception plays a significant role in shaping a manager's leadership style, decision-making, and performance (Gentry et al., 2008; Jodar i Solà et al., 2016; John & Robins, 1994; Luthans & Peterson, 2002). Moreover, in their 1994 study, John and Robins investigated accuracy and bias in self-perception, focusing on individual differences in self-enhancement and the role of narcissism. The authors examined how people perceive themselves compared to external evaluations, revealing that individuals exhibit biases in self-perception accuracy. Notably, the study found that self-enhancement varies, with some individuals showing biases towards overestimation while others may display tendencies of self-diminishment, and these variations are associated with narcissistic traits. More recently, Nassif et al. (2014) analyzed Brazilian entrepreneur's self-perception of strategic planning skills. The findings emphasized the importance of balancing external influences with personal abilities, particularly innovation and experience, in strategic planning. Later, Jodar i Solà et al. (2016) investigated the self-perception of leadership styles and behaviors among primary healthcare professionals in their study. They explored how individuals within the primary healthcare setting perceive their own leadership styles and behaviors, aiming to understand the implications of these self-perceptions on organizational dynamics and leadership effectiveness in this context.

In spite of the significance of management in tourism (Doswell, 2009; Luthans & Peterson, 2002; Peters, 2005; Ritchie, 2004), this investigation domain remains understudied. The majority of

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[1] Given the ongoing nature of the Movement, the term "Social Movement" is imputed in this study by reflecting the interviewees' varied preferred terms such as Modern Revolution, Mahsa's Revolution, Uprising, Movement, Women Life Freedom movement and simply the Social Movement. The final term has been chosen due to its simplicity and frequent use by the participants.

publications on the subject of self-perception and tourism focus on local residents' attitudes towards tourists and tourism development (Woosnam et al., 2018), tourists and whether the activities they choose are impacted by their self-perception (Kiliç et al., 2017; Prebensen et al., 2003), or on consumer behavior and its congruence with tourists' perceived self (Beerli et al., 2007; Litvin & Goh, 2002; Murphy et al., 2007; Sirgy et al., 1997). Regarding workforce and management studies, there has been limited research conducted on the concept of self-perception. From an entrepreneurial point of view, Hallak et al. (2015) explored the relationship between tourism entrepreneurs' performances and place identity, self-efficacy, and gender. Moreover, Castro and Ferreira (2019) examined how personal maturity and entrepreneurial factors impact the performance of Portuguese rural tourism entrepreneurs. However, to the best of our knowledge, there remains a gap in research regarding the self-perception of women managers.

2.3. Gendered leadership and management in tourism

Studies reveal that tourism organizations are often gendered in ways that impact women's experiences and opportunities as leaders (Carvalho et al., 2018; Costa, Bakas, Breda, Durão, Carvalho, & Caçador, 2017; Freund & Hernandez-Maskivker, 2021; Pritchard & Morgan, 2017; Remington & Kitterlin-Lynch, 2018). Women in tourism management not only navigate expectations associated with effective leadership but also confront biases that can affect their self-perception and overall confidence in their roles (Koenig et al., 2011). Research suggests that female managers may underestimate their leadership abilities due to societal biases or differences in their leadership style (Burke & Collins, 2001), or even doubt their suitability for leadership if it is associated with traditionally masculine attributes (Einarsdottir et al., 2018; Herbst, 2020; Sturm et al., 2014). In tourism—a sector that remains particularly gendered, especially in its leadership dynamics—these challenges could be amplified. The industry's specific expectations around leadership and service roles can make female leaders more susceptible to self-doubt, as they may feel pressured to conform to both industry-specific gender norms and traditional stereotypes about effective management.

While a significant portion of the literature on women leaders in tourism rightly underscores the persistent, gendered barriers that women face in advancing to the "top" of the industry, studies also emphasize the valuable contributions that women bring to tourism leadership. Female leaders are recognized for fostering a sense of community, mutual support, and shared values (Silva Dos Santos et al., 2024)—qualities that align closely with the evolving needs of the tourism sector. Traits commonly associated with feminine leadership are increasingly desired in tourism management (Costa, Bakas, Breda, & Durão, 2017), where they contribute to a more holistic and responsive organizational culture. Additionally, the resilience and visibility of women leaders help break down gender biases, encouraging more equitable workplaces and empowering other women to aspire to leadership roles (Pécot et al., 2024).

2.4. Women and social change

In recent years, social movements advocating for gender equity have spurred discussions on women's empowerment and participation in leadership roles across various industries. Although research on these movements' effects on tourism is limited, studies in other sectors suggest they may inspire female leaders to challenge stereotypes and reassess their self-perceptions, potentially strengthening their leadership identity and confidence (Castle et al., 2020; Levy & Mattsson, 2023). The combination of visibility and societal change may encourage women leaders in tourism to navigate gender biases more assertively, challenging the status quo and reshaping leadership norms within the industry.

In light of the earlier discussions, this investigation focuses on Iranian women's self-perception as tourism managers before and after the recent waves of protests and social change. With no prior studies on Iran's recent social movement (internationally known by the slogan *Women, Life, Freedom.*) at the moment, literature on events directly associated with women, namely the #MeToo movement and social movements such as the Arab Spring waves of protests and uprisings (2010-2012, Middle East), and research on previous feminist movements in Iran were consulted as references. Women's awareness and political participation increased following the #MeToo movement (Castle et al., 2020). Examining its impact on sexual harassment awareness and political engagement during the 2018 midterm elections, the study found that #MeToo primarily elevated salience in individuals predisposed to supporting its goals. Other studies have delved into the movement's broader effects on society, including heightened awareness of sexual harassment (Castle et al., 2020; Levy & Mattsson, 2023), increased reporting of sexual abuse, and the apprehension of abusers (Levy & Mattsson, 2023), and shifts in corporate board gender compositions in California (Heminway, 2019).

Examining the Arab Spring, a social movement geographically and culturally closer to our case study, Hussain and Haj-Salem (2022) identified improvements in job opportunities and education in countries like Iraq and Egypt, in contrast to poorer quality jobs in Morocco. Corporate gender diversity in Arab communities, while showing minor improvements, still needs attention (Abdelzaher & Abdelzaher, 2019). Moghadam (2014) noted a positive correlation between women's participation and post-social movement transitions. Comparing feminist movements in Morocco and Iran in 2011, Moghadam and Gheytanchi found varied outcomes, with Morocco implementing a new family law, while Iran faced suppression. Recent feminist movements in Iran, though unofficial and suppressed, have impacted women, contributing to gender equity to some extent (Hosseini et al., 2023; Khalajabadi-Farahani et al., 2019).

Considering the lack of studies and the existence of a research gap regarding tourism managers' self-perception from a gendered perspective, and the novelty of the recent Social Movement in Iran, this article aims to fill part of the existing research gap. This goal will be undertaken by analyzing how Iranian women tourism managers generally perceive themselves as managers and their management skills, and investigating whether the recent Social Movements have in any way influenced their self-perception regarding their management qualities and skills. The study of self-perception among women in tourism not only fills a crucial research gap but also contributes to a broader theoretical understanding of gender and leadership in highly public and socially constructed work environments. By focusing on self-perception as a theoretical lens, this research brings attention to how women's self-concepts and leadership identities are shaped by gendered expectations, social influences, and industry-specific factors.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research approach

To guide our research philosophy, we have embraced a constructivist approach, aiming to acquire a comprehensive understanding of each individual's subjective reality (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2014). Within this ontological paradigm, qualitative semi-structured interviews stand as a widely employed research method in the social sciences, including tourism (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004; Wilson & Hollinshead, 2015). A qualitative approach proves particularly valuable for exploring individuals' perspectives and experiences in detail (Ridder, 2017), offering a rich source of data for analysis (Fylan, 2005). The semi-structured interviews' flexibility, as a method of data collection, allows a comprehensive coverage of topics during the interview while still providing a structured framework for exploration (Dearnley, 2005). It enables the researcher to probe for additional information or clarification, proving to be a valuable tool for investigating complex and diverse research problems (Charmaz, 2014). Furthermore, semi-structured

interviews are adept at collecting rich data on sensitive or personal topics, as participants often find it more comfortable to discuss their experiences in an interview setting compared to a formal survey or questionnaire (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Considering the ontology of this research, both Feminist theory and the Grounded theory are essential inspirations for our methodological framework. The investigation invariably falls within the Feminist theory for it focuses on the experiences and perceptions of women in tourism management roles Feminist theory advocates for understanding and addressing gender inequalities, and this study aims to amplify the voices of women in a society traditionally dominated by men (Ferguson, 2017; Gross, 2013). Additionally, rooted in the interpretive tradition, the grounded theory y fixates on constructing theory from the data rather than testing pre-existing hypotheses (Charmaz, 2014). Through an iterative process, themes and concepts emerge, contributing to the development of a substantive theory that is grounded in the data itself, which allows this research to echo its participants' unique experiences.

In applying grounded theory to our study, we have used Braun and Clarke's (2019) approach, which offers a systematic and transparent method for analyzing qualitative data through thematic analysis. This approach involves identifying themes within the data, a process that aligns well with the exploratory nature of our study. By employing Braun and Clarke's (2019) methodology, we sought to maintain the flexibility inherent in grounded theory while providing a clear and structured process for coding and theme development. This combination allows us to capitalize on the strengths of both approaches, resulting in a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of Iranian women tourism managers' self-perception.

In line with Braun and Clarke's (2019) approach to grounded theory, we thoroughly followed the steps of their methodology. This involved systematically coding data, identifying themes, and iteratively refining our understanding of the self-perception of Iranian women tourism managers. By adopting this approach, we aim to provide an intricate and in-depth understanding of the research problem, aligning with the objectives of this paper and contributing to a broader landscape of tourism research, focusing on women in management.

The methodology for this study involved virtual individual interviews with purposely selected women tourism managers due to the nature of the study (Ridder, 2017), which mainly took place via WhatsApp, Skype, Google Meet or Imo video and voice calls. Sticking to one platform was impossible due to the irregularities in the internet connection in Iran after the beginning of the Social Movement. A semistructured interview was used to elicit participants' self-perceptions and experiences related to the recent Social Movement in Iran. In addition to the reasons mentioned above, there are also some operational reasons for choosing semi-structured interviews as our data-gathering option. The authors needed not only to ascertain the participants' opinions about their managerial performance and skills but also to identify any changes in their behavior or attitude that were not verbally exposed. Therefore, it was decided to interview each participant individually (Dearnley, 2005; Longhurst, 2003).

3.2. Research design

This section outlines the interview design and execution process, lists the interviewees, details the data analysis and presentation methods, and introduces the key ethical protocols of the research.

Due to the sensitive nature of the study, participants were provided with pertinent information, conducted in Persian for clarity and cultural sensitivity (Marschan-Piekkari & Reis, 2004). The first five participants were purposefully selected from the author's contacts, with recruitment continuing through a snowballing strategy until data saturation when no additional new information was being elicited (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest et al., 2006). Ethical considerations, including informed consent, data anonymity, and continuous monitoring, were promptly addressed in strict adherence to our university's protocols and international

standards to safeguard participant well-being and rights. Participants were allowed to omit any questions they found uncomfortable and to terminate the interview at any stage. They were assured that their identifiable personal information would be redacted in the final study document and replaced with codes or pseudonyms. Upon consenting to being recorded, interview files remained confidential, accessible solely to the primary author (interviewer), and stored securely offline; participants maintained the prerogative to retract their data post-interview and before the article's submission to an academic journal. After a general introduction without mentioning the purpose of the research to avoid influencing their responses, the interviewees were asked to talk openly about their management experience. Later they were asked to talk about themselves as managers and try to define or describe themselves. If their responses were not sufficiently clear, they were asked to elaborate further and explain what kind of manager they thought they were.

Finally, to obtain a better understanding of their self-perception of management skills, they were asked to name as many important managerial skills and aspects as they could and say if they believed they possessed those characteristics. The researcher also asked them additional questions about key managerial skills not mentioned in the previous step, asking them to convey whether they thought they had those skills or not. These additional questions were based on a checklist previously made by the research team. The initial list of managerial skills was developed by amalgamating and adapting the following previous studies: Burke & Collins, 2001; Gentry et al., 2008; Sisson & Adams, 2013; Nassif et al., 2014; and Castro & Ferreira, 2019. The resulting list served as a guideline for the researchers and the interviewer. At the beginning of the study, the authors conducted four pilot-run interviews to test the quality and the structure of the interviews, and the final list of "management skills" developed from the managerial skills emerged from the pilot-run interviews, verified by the mentioned skills in the noted literature.

The initial participants were selected purposefully from the first author's contacts as they are familiar with the tourism sector in the case study country and have experience working in it. The selection was based on having at least one year of professional experience and to be currently working as managers, directors, or supervisors in the tourism industry. The participants were women who held managerial roles in the Iranian tourism sector, including managers, company leaders, department supervisors, or general managers of public or private companies prior to the Social Movement. Subsequently, a "snowballing" approach was utilized to recruit additional participants, with each interviewee encouraged to suggest another suitable candidate. Recruitment and interviews will continue until data saturation is reached.

Through the first step of the study, which was to analyze Iranian women tourism managers' self-perception as managers and their managerial skills, ten individuals were interviewed out of whom only five agreed to be re-interviewed after the Social Movement had begun. Hence in the second step, five of the previously interviewed participants joined the study and more individuals were recruited with the intention of data reassurance.

The same interview with the same dynamics and questions was carried out with the first five interviewees who had already been interviewed in the first step. This allowed the authors to compare their responses and detect any feasible changes that occurred. The newly recruited participants were asked to respond while separating their experience before and after the Social Movement. At the end of the interview, they were asked to specifically reveal if the movement had prompted any shifts in their self-perception.

The first author's background helped the team of authors identify this novel issue and access means for gathering first-hand data. Throughout the data gathering and interview process, great care was taken to avoid influencing participants' opinions and to create a comfortable environment that encouraged genuine and honest responses. The other two authors, not sharing the same perspective and
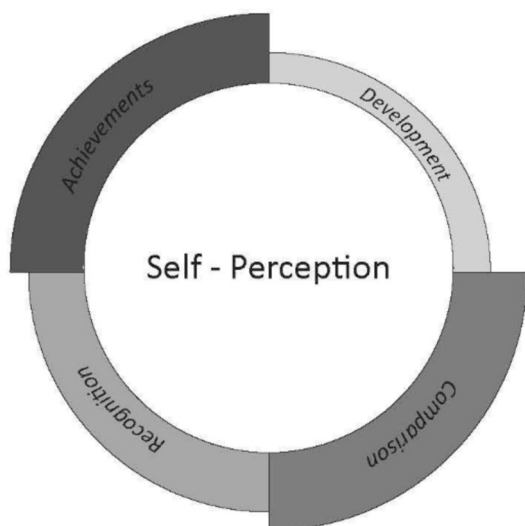
background, further helped to reduce bias during stages such as data gathering and analysis. Their involvement at every stage of the research process ensured that bias was minimized as much as possible. They also maintained a necessary distance from the participants to uphold objectivity and reduce bias in the research.

Each interview took between one and two hours approximately. Due to security issues, not all participants agreed to be recorded. Thus, some interviews had to be completely transcribed simultaneously during the interview which made them longer than usual. The researchers ensured complete confidentiality and anonymity of all participants. All personal information that could reveal the participants' identities, such as their last names, workplaces, and other identifying details, were removed from the transcripts. As shown in Table 1, each participant was given a pseudonym (P1-P14) to protect their privacy.

3.3. Data analysis

To analyze the empirical data, the researchers used a thematic analysis approach (Walters, 2016). Several stages were followed throughout the thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Walters, 2016). First, the transcripts were read to gain a general understanding and become familiar with the participants' responses. Second, initial codes were manually assigned to the transcripts and were tried to identify connections between different pieces of data. Next, the several patterns and themes that emerged from the data were categorized into three main themes and broader categories to draw conclusions and insights about the research questions (see Table 2). Finally, the data was cross-checked by the team of authors to ensure the reliability of the analyzed data.

4. Findings & discussion

This section presents the findings of the study based on a thematic analysis. The themes from the data have been grouped into three blocks: *Self-Perception Defining approaches, Overall Self-Perception of Skills,* and *Social Movement's influence on Self-Perception.*

4.1. Self-perception defining approaches

As mentioned earlier, the interviewed managers were asked to define themselves as tourism managers and express their self-perception of management skills freely. Throughout the interviews, they used multiple methods for defining themselves as managers and their skills. Four of these were widely and commonly used by the majority of them: *Reflection on Achievements, Comparison to male peers, Recognition from the staff and the clients,* and *Professional development* that are grouped here as the first block of themes. (See Fig. 1).

Table 1
List of interview participants.

Participants	Position	Experience
P1	Hotel reception manager	2 years
P2	Start-up Manager	Over 10 years
P3	Travel agency technical managers	4 years
P4	Guiding association director	8 years
P5	HR Manager in a tourism consultancy company	Over 10 years
P6	Tourism journal director	3 years
P7	Marketing manager, travel agency	4 years
P8	Hostel reservation department manager	Over 10 years
P9	Travel agency technical managers	5 years
P10	Hotel reservation department manager	5-10 years
P11	Hotel restaurant-cafe supervisor	5-10 years
P12	Travel agency manager	Over 10 years
P13	Hotel manager	5 years
P14	Travel agency manager	5-10 years

Table 2
Selection of quotes and themes.

Selection of self-descriptive statements	Emerged themes	Block of themes
"Throughout my management career, I have reached all my goals."		
"I evaluate myself positively, as I barely fail in any project."		
"Overall, as a manager, I have been successful. I have successfully launched projects that everyone thought were impossible."	Reflection on Achievements	
"If I am not certain I can do something for them [staff] I do not give any promises. But I have seen their male managers giving them 10 promises and doing only 2."		
"When I am in a meeting with department managers, I see it clearly. They [men] keep bragging about how they came up with an idea and how hard they have worked for it even if it is a failure while my girls [women managers] just present what they have achieved and do not emphasize the process of it."	Comparison to male peers	
"I have always tried to treat my staff well. I stay late with them finishing last minute tasks, I never think it is beneath me."		
"Many customers know me personally and specifically ask for my assistance. They come back every year, which, to me, speaks volumes about the strong relationships I've built with them."		
"Our job is hard, …, but I have had employees telling me that they are here (in the company) because of me, they'd leave if I leave."	Recognition from the staff and the clients	
"Of course I did not start here. I was not a director since day 1, I have worked hard for it."		
"Here, especially being a woman, they don't give you these kind of positions for free! You have to be very good."		
"If you are a woman and you are not much better than everybody else, you will not become a boss; that's for sure."	Professional development	Self-Perception Defining approaches

4.1.1. Reflection on career achievements

Many participants frequently engaged in reflective exploration of their achievements, using them as a cornerstone to define their identities as tourism managers. When asked to talk about themselves in their managerial roles, the majority chose to highlight their accomplishments throughout their careers. They initially talked about their "success" in their current position, "fulfillment of difficult projects", and their "resistance" against "milestones and barriers". This underscores the significance and value of success for Iranian women in management positions within the tourism industry.

P2. *"I have been successful in almost every project I started and every goal I set, so I would say I am a very successful director."*

P7. *"How I see myself as a manager, is, an undefeatable warrior. It is very difficult to stop me from trying to reach my goals."*

The selected quotes, drawn from extensive statements and achievement stories, succinctly illustrate the substantial influence of goal achievement and success on the self-perception of these women tourism

Fig. 1. Managerial self-perception definers of Iranian women as tourism managers.

managers. This demonstrates a strong self-perception, built over time, which has continuously evolved (Morina, 2021) with each successful project and each new achievement they have gained. The informants' introductory steps in defining their managerial self-perception align with Bem's theory (Bem, 1972), wherein they adopt an external perspective, analyzing their own achievements as if they were outsiders.

4.1.2. Comparison to male peers

Another tool widely used by our participants for defining themselves as managers was comparing themselves to the men working in similar positions in other departments of their company, or other companies. Nowhere during the interview process had they been asked to talk about or compare themselves to their peers, yet many participants reflected on their male colleagues' performance in order to define themselves as managers. This self-perception defining approach falls within Festinger's Social Comparison (Festinger, 1954), yet adds a unique dimension to it. The participants did not clearly state or display if they were comparing themselves with "superior" peers (upward comparison) or with "inferior" peers (downward comparison) (Gerber et al., 2018). They simply manifested how they constantly feel compared to or feel the need to prove themselves in comparison with men in tourism management. This aspect, however, is unsurprising given the gender-discriminatory dynamics of Iranian society (World Economic Forum, 2024; Hosseini et al., 2023).

The majority of participants saw differences in the managerial performance of their male colleagues and themselves. However, only a small minority of the interviewees stated that any probable differences between men and women in the workplace are due to the variety of personalities and have nothing to do with gender.

Some respondents called their male co-workers "overly confident". They believe being raised in a society with patriarchal values has given them "too much confidence". Not having women's workplace hurdles, including but not limited to, "night shift restrictions in some organizations", "traveling limitations by families" and the "discriminative corporate and organizational culture" is another factor known to have given them more boldness. Several participants linked these differences between men and women in tourism management positions to cultural and societal norms of the country.

P3. *"…oh my god, they are SO overconfident! I say SO like this because it does not reflect their skills. I see some of them and think, I am definitely better than you in my job, but I am much more doubtful about myself!"*

P4. *"They are raised to do whatever they want and be supported; we are raised to be careful about our every step and are always criticized."*

Most participants claimed that their male colleagues focus more on the process and are less affected by the failure. While they (as women) focus more on their objective and are goal-oriented. Hence, if the result or the product is not acceptably good, they blame and criticize themselves. Being more honest with clients and staff was also a quality more possessed by women than men in the tourism industry according to the participants. They mentioned that sometimes they have observed them being less transparent with clients to have better sales. Not being entirely sincere with employees was also mentioned by some interviewees.

P9. *"I think the term is sugar-coating. Yes, they sugarcoat everything. If there is a 50 % chance of a client having a successful visa application, I will tell them there is a 50 % chance. Some men casually say: You will get it, don't worry!"*

The approach of selecting a group of peers (men in similar positions) for comparison can be considered a clear affirmation of Festinger's Social Comparison theory. In doing so, the majority of the interviewees portrayed their managerial skills favorably. Despite this pattern potentially indicating a biased self-perception (John & Robins, 1994), it is noteworthy that the interviewees did not exhibit overt signs of overselling or overestimating their abilities. Instead, they tended to present the existing differences truthfully and modestly. This subtle behavior suggests a conscientious effort to accurately represent themselves.

The participants put themselves in the same group as female managers and in contrast to their male counterparts as a group, and did the comparisons using terms such as "them" and "us", claiming the existence of managerial differences between the two groups. This contradicts scholars such as Powell (1990) who have tried to progressively look at management and refute gender differences in management styles. This insight might be rooted in the patriarchal structure of the Iranian society (Hosseini et al., 2023).

4.1.3. Workplace recognition

Many of our participants consistently emphasized the significance of recognition from their dedicated teams, highlighting the mutual appreciation that fosters a harmonious work environment. Furthermore, the acknowledgment received from clients served as a testament to the excellence and professionalism displayed by these women in managerial roles. In this exploration of recognition, we look into the narratives where participants reflect on the affirmations from their staff and the valuable feedback they receive from clients.

Many of the interviewees mentioned they have deep bonds, especially with the regular clients, and they are personally trusted by them. One interviewee raised how important her presence is for some clients. She claimed they have various loyal guests who ask for her while making any bookings and have mentioned to her that she is one of the main reasons they choose their hotel. Other participants made similar statements:

P1. *"I have a very good, and professional relationship with clients. They trust me, and I make sure I meet their expectations. It sounds weird but they might even cancel their bookings if I am not available!"*

P8. *"Many customers know me personally and specifically ask for my assistance. They come back every year, which, to me, speaks volumes about the strong relationships I've built with them."*

Having a close relationship with staff, being understanding and patient, honest, and a good mentor to them was another reflection made by most of the participants as indicators of being a good manager and defining their self-perception. Throughout their discussions, it became evident that they view these connections as integral to their managerial success and self-perception.

Aside from confirming the widely proven impacts of recognition in

the workplace (Bradler et al., 2016; Luthans & Stajkovic, 2012), the shared perspectives from these interviews underscore the paramount importance these women managers attribute to fostering positive relationships with both their staff and clients, which is in line with Gentry et al.'s (2008) findings that highlighted the increasing importance of relationships in management.

4.1.4. Professional development exploration

Professional development also emerged as a pivotal tool wielded by some of the study participants, shaping their identities as managers and influencing the articulation of their managerial skills' self-perception. They expounded upon their career trajectories, delineating the progression from initial roles in subordinate positions or less esteemed organizations to their present managerial and leadership positions. Within these narratives, the pervasive theme of professional advancement was manifested, emphasizing their trajectory towards managerial roles as a validation of their competencies. These individuals not only acknowledge their developmental journey but also attribute their current managerial positions as a demonstration of their proficiency and merit.

For instance, one participant, transitioning from a role in janitorial services to supervisor of the restaurant and coffee shop within her organization, asserts that she has consistently embraced professional growth without reservation. This fearlessness has not only gotten her to her current position but also serves as a testament to her competence as a supervisor.

P11. *"I am not afraid of growth, some people are. Whenever they offered me a new opportunity I just said yes, I went for it, I did not think I was not good enough. Where I was 7 years ago has nothing to do with my position now. I believe [that if] I wasn't doing a good job, I wouldn't be here."*

This theme appears to have similarities with the first theme of this section, "Reflection on Achievements", which demonstrated informants' use of self-perception theory (Bem, 1972; Morina, 2021) to shape their self-perception, but in fact, these two themes are slightly different. In the previously mentioned theme, Iranian women focused on their outcomes as managers, while here they have reflected on their whole career since the beginning. They tried to objectively assess the journey they have undertaken as a working woman, emphasizing countless barriers and obstacles of female tourism leaders (Carvalho et al., 2019) resulting from a patriarchal social structure (Hosseini et al., 2023; Khalajabadi-Farahani et al., 2019).

The insights gleaned from this section underscore the diverse strategies employed by our informants in the definition of their self-perception. Through reflective analysis of achievements, comparative evaluations with male counterparts, and a profound emphasis on recognition from both staff and clients, these women construct a robust managerial identity. Moreover, the narratives of professional development serve as a compelling testament to their journey from humble beginnings to esteemed leadership roles, emphasizing the intrinsic link between career progression and managerial competence.

This block underpins that the participants utilize tools such as adapting external analysis to understand their internal aspects or engaging in social comparison which, as previously said, resonate with fundamental theories such as Bem's and Festinger's. Furthermore, the data indicates that the participants often compare themselves to their male counterparts, not necessarily feeling inferior, but rather asserting superiority or neutrally evaluating. Although their expressions are mostly calm, there are subtle signs of hostility or underlying discontent, reflecting that the gender discrimination prevalent in tourism leadership ecosystem (Freund & Hernandez-Maskivker, 2021; Remington & Kitterlin-Lynch, 2018) and the Iranian society can affect the ways in which women shape their self-perception.

4.2. Overall self-perception

In the second thematic block, the informants' foremost descriptors of their self-perception as tourism managers are presented. This block is bifurcated into two sections, each capturing distinct aspects. Initially, the focus is on the recurring adjectives or skills employed by the interviewees to characterize themselves as managers. Following this, the second section portrays insights emerging as interviewees explored their strengths and weaknesses.

4.2.1. Preeminent factors

The data gathered through interviewing Iranian women tourism managers in this study suggests that women managers have a rather favorable self-perception of themselves as managers; since all of the interviewees declared they are "very good at their job", "good leaders" and "very successful" as managers. The most frequent terms used by these women to describe themselves as managers were *Responsible, Hard-working, Confident, Strong, Successful, Organized, and Purposeful.*

Fig. 2 illustrates that the participants perceived themselves as responsible and hardworking managers. Likewise, the majority of managers considered themselves to be confident leaders, as well as successful and purposeful.

P11. *"I worked really hard to get here, and I continue working hard. It is because I love my job and of course, because I have to, it is my responsibility. I guess the higher you go [in a job position] the more responsible you become".*

This theme reveals that women managers in this industry consistently describe themselves using similar adjectives both before and after the Movement. This suggests that they have maintained their overall self-identity despite changes in society. This section contributes data to the understudied topic of tourism managers' self-perception from a gendered perspective. Moreover, it challenges previous studies that suggest women managers tend to underestimate themselves (Herbst, 2020; Sturm et al., 2014) or feel the need to conform to masculine characteristics (Einarsdottir et al., 2018; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2010). Contrary to these findings, Iranian women in the tourism industry demonstrate an overall positive self-perception. This insight sheds light on how women in an oppressive society, where their rights are often overlooked, confidently shape their self-perception as managers. This aligns with the earlier work of Van Velsor et al. (1993), countering the notion of tourism's women leaders' "under-confidence" and emphasizing their confidence in achieving higher positions in their careers.
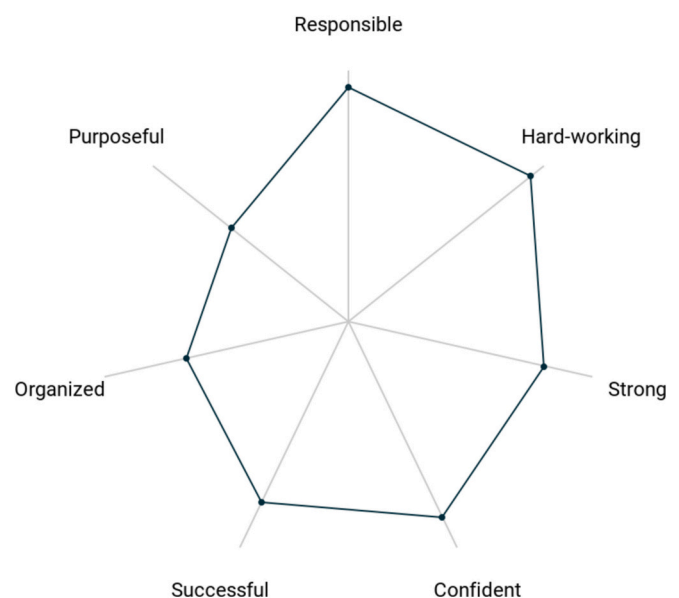
Fig. 2. Iranian women's overall self-perception as tourism and hospitality managers.

4.2.2. Strengths and weaknesses

Another emerging theme was how they tried to focus on their strengths as well as their weaknesses. A noticeable number of our participants used the terms strengths versus weaknesses to better describe themselves. Broadly speaking, they did not mention a lot of weaknesses, but they named a few.

The qualities that our respondents referred to as their strengths were similar to the terms already mentioned as their general self-perception as tourism managers. According to our data, Iranian women in the position of managers in the tourism and hospitality industry discern being *responsible, hard-working, honest, flexible, compassionate, and having a good relationship with both staff and clients* as indicators of strength in management positions.

Additionally, they stated as a weakness the fact that they were *strict* (especially at the beginning of their career due to their young age) and *failed to balance their career and personal life* due to their dedication to their job. The term *"hard-working"* appeared to be considered both a strength and a weakness.

In conclusion, this section provides insight into the perspectives of Iranian women managers, offering a detailed view of their self-perception. Beyond showcasing a positive self-perception, it prompts a reconsideration of stereotypes. They demonstrate a clear awareness of themselves as they handle managerial roles, emphasizing dedication and resilience in the field of tourism management.

P10. *"Sometimes I work too hard, I know it is important to be hard-working to be a good manager, but not THIS hard...(laughs) I mean it is not necessary sometimes."*

The results presented in these themes highlight that women tourism managers in Iran have a strong sense of self-perception, with notable strengths, since they detect in themselves qualities that have been proven to be essential to the role of management (Gentry et al., 2008) and in tourism and hospitality leadership (Sisson & Adams, 2013). Participants were predisposed to emphasize their strengths over their weaknesses. This finding supports Jodar i Solà et al.'s (2016) proposition of managers praising themselves on positive qualities. The data also indicated that Iranian women tourism managers include "working hard" in both their strengths and weaknesses, for "not being able to relax" can be considered a weakness in management (Drath, 1990). This finding shows a correlation with Douglas and Morris's (2006) theory, categorizing hard workers without interest in financial gains as "workaholics". In the long term, this group tends to show dissatisfaction about working too hard.

4.3. The influence of the social movement on managerial self-perception

As previously debated, one important stage of the interviews was to discuss managerial skills with our respondents, intending to comprehend if they possess those skills or not, and whether they perceive any transformations in their managerial skills after the social uprising.

A total of 23 managerial skills or values stemming from the interviews and the literature were discussed with each interviewee, which are as follows: being *Dedicated*, being a *Quick learner*, being *Decisive*, having good *Communication Skills*, *Confronting Problems*, having good *Leading Skills*, *Setting a Developmental Climate*, having *Team-work Orientation*, *Hiring Talented Staff*, *Building and Mending Relationships* with both clients and employees, having *Compassion and Sensitivity*, being *Straightforward*, having *Self-awareness*, holding *Flexibility*, *Balancing Work and Personal Life*, being *Knowledgeable*, being *Innovative*, having *IT and Administrative Skills*, being *Responsible*, being a *Good Mentor, Earning Employees' Respect*, being *Honest*, and showing *Confidence*.

The principal finding underpinning this is that there have been no significant shifts in the self-perception of many managerial skills among Iranian women tourism managers after the Social Movement. The Iranian women interviewed have a very positive perception of their managerial skills. Most participants believed they fully possessed key managerial skills such as "Communication skills", "Hiring talented staff", "Building and mending relationships", being "Knowledgeable", "Responsible", a "Good mentor" and "Honest". Additionally, "Confronting problems", "Leading skills", "Setting a developmental climate", and "Straightforwardness" were also mentioned by most interviewees as skills they possessed extensively. These were the skills that have not experienced any paramount changes, according to the participants of the study.

"Dedication", the only variable experiencing a noticeable diminution, is one of the main terms that shows a change. The majority of the interviewees claimed to have a sense of dedication to their career, but the beginning of the Social Movement has made them doubtful about this feeling. One participant explicitly stated that she is not fully dedicated to her job anymore. They presented very similar arguments for clarifying this shift. They have been questioning how much they have "overworked" and "compromised their personal lives" for their careers. The side effects of this Social Movement - including chaos on the streets (especially in bigger cities), an unstable economy, uncertainty towards the future, migration of human resources, and an unsafe image of the country - have created several challenges for the Iranian tourism industry. Therefore, these women as managers of the industry now claim to be more doubtful about their careers and this has led to a cutback in their professional dedication.

"Compassion and Sensibility" and "flexibility" are two other terms in which changes are observed. Several interviewees have much more compassion and flexibility than before (even though they already had it before the Social Movement) towards their staff, especially women and young ones. This is because they see them as courageous individuals who are trying hard to fight for their rights. The respondents have repeatedly talked about how they see their younger and women employees differently now and how they have a great feeling of empathy for them and are trying not to be as strict with them and in general with women.

"Self-awareness" and "Earning employees' respect" were reported to have varied the most. "Self-awareness" was another factor reported to have been elevated among the informants. The majority, even the participants who were highly self-aware before the Social Movement, stated that they had gained more self-awareness. The nature of the Social Movement being linked to women, their rights and their position in society, and how their actions are perceived and reacted to were among the reasons behind this change mentioned by the interviewees. Our respondents also said they have felt more respected by their employees recently. However, this feeling of being more respected is not limited to their workplace. They claimed to have observed and experienced much more respect towards all women in Iranian society, from both men and women. Some participants claimed to be observing a shift in the collective mindset of Iranian society.

The entire group of participants revealed that they have more confidence than before, not only in themselves but also in other women in society. As stated before, these women were already confident before the Social Movement, but this feeling has increased after the revolution, and they are experiencing a higher level of confidence in themselves, and they see it in many other women around them too.

P3. *"I look at the staff differently now, I have this feeling of respect for how brave these young women are, to fight for their rights. Actually, I feel the same about all women, all young women maybe."*

The 3rd block delves into the impact of the Social Movement on the managerial skills of Iranian women tourism managers. The study has revealed several findings. First, the majority of the managerial skills possessed by the respondents did not change significantly before and after the Social Movement. However, it was found that the Social Movement had a significant impact on some of the managerial skills possessed by Iranian women tourism managers. The uniformity observed in the factors that were enhanced in society and among the interviewed women bears a resemblance to Castle et al.'s (2020)

findings, where they highlighted how the #MeToo movement, dedicated to advocating for victims of sexual harassment, similarly increased awareness about issues of abuse in society. Similarities can be seen between how Iran's Social Movement has influenced women and how North American society was mobilized by the #MeToo movement (Castle et al., 2020). This evidence can signify that members of a community become more sensitive and engaged with women's conditions as a consequence of such influential movements. The parallels can also be drawn to Moghadam's assertion in 2014, that political movements in Arab societies have resulted in heightened political engagement.

Additionally, this study found that the Social Movement has increased the level of compassion and flexibility among Iranian women as tourism managers, especially towards their younger and women employees. Compassion is an expected factor to increase among society members after social movements (Suk et al., 2019), and in this case, there have been modifications to the image of "women" and "young people" during the Social Movement as reported by worldwide recognized media (Hoog & Morresi, 2022; Moaveni, 2022). This modified image of women in Iranian society is also one of the fundamental arguments explaining why these women tourism managers feel more respected by their employees.

The interviewees also expressed that they are more self-aware and have more confidence in themselves and other women around them, and they mutually feel more respected not only in the workplace but also in Iranian society. These changes can be perceived as corresponding to the positive changes regarding women's situation in the United States after the #MeToo movement (Castle et al., 2020) and in some Arab countries (i.e. Iraq and Egypt) after the Arab Spring (Hussain & Haj-Salem, 2022). However, given that some countries such as Morocco have faced regressions in women's educational and labor conditions in the long term after the Arab Spring (Hussain & Haj-Salem, 2022) and the oppression of previous feminist movements in Iran (Moghadam & Gheytanchi, 2011), there is a potential for Iranian women's labor and social condition to deteriorate in long term. This phenomenon can only be ascertained by longitudinal studies of the topic.

To summarize, in multiple manners there are similarities between previously studied feminist social movements and our case study. The findings highlight the dual nature of social movements, particularly those advocating for women's rights, as they can both favorably and adversely affect the self-perception of women in tourism leadership roles. These movements, when influential in shaping societal stability, may introduce uncertainties about career landscapes and future prospects, leading to a reduced effort and dedication to their jobs by women in tourism management. Simultaneously, these movements contribute positively by fostering increased self-awareness among women managers, expanding their understanding of their societal roles and rights. Consequently, a boost in confidence is observed, as well as greater respect from employees and a more compassionate approach towards their staff. However, structural corporate changes (Heminway, 2019), as well as progressions in laws and legislation (Levy & Mattsson, 2023) have not still been observed in Iranian society. Fig. 3 graphically exhibits the theoretical contribution of this article's findings, which lay in the convergence between self-perception, social movements, and tourism management.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Theoretical implications

This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on women's leadership in tourism by examining how gendered industry dynamics intersect with self-perception among Iranian women in management roles. Given tourism's status as a traditionally gendered sector, female leaders in this industry may experience heightened self-perception challenges, as they contend with expectations tied to both feminine and managerial roles. Through applying feminist theories and
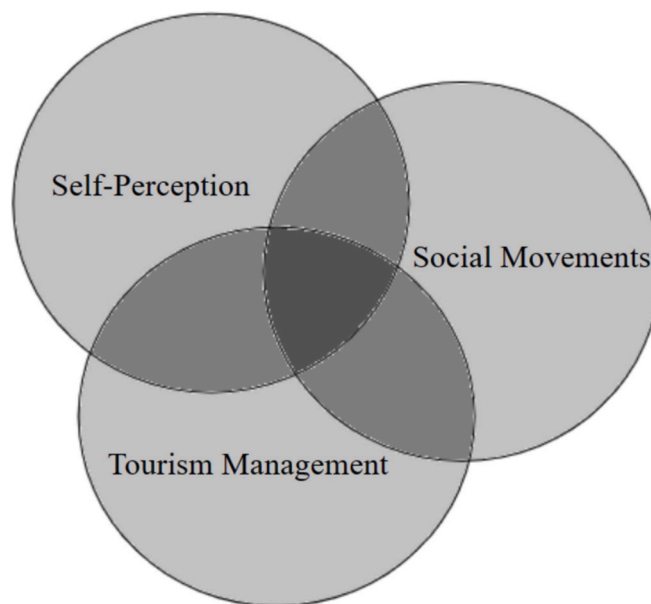

**Fig. 3.** The theoretical contribution of the study.

self-perception frameworks, this study provides a conceptual framework into how women in tourism leadership develop their professional identities amidst gendered expectations and societal pressures.

The findings also underscore the influence of social movements advocating for gender equality on self-perception. Contemporary movements have encouraged women in tourism leadership to reframe their self-concept, moving towards a stronger, more self-assured identity as they redefine their roles in an evolving social landscape. This shift not only fosters greater self-awareness and empowerment but also helps women leaders in tourism align their self-perception with emerging values around gender equity and inclusivity.

The diverse self-perception definers identified in this study contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender, professional identity, and societal norms. The visibility and constant interaction inherent to the tourism sector increase the chances of female leaders being influenced by social shifts, which can either bolster or challenge their self-concept based on societal feedback. By revealing these dynamics, the research enriches existing theories on gender, leadership, and professional identity within the tourism context. The emphasis on success, the comparison with male peers, the significance of recognition, and the narratives of professional development collectively provide a rich understanding of the layered nature of managerial self-perception among Iranian women managers in the tourism industry. This provides a new perspective on how women in tourism management perceive and identify themselves, potentially serving as a basis for future self-perception studies focused on women or managers in the field of tourism.

The study's recognition of social movements in shaping the self-perception of women in managerial roles carries significant implications. The Social Movement has introduced uncertainties in Iran's tourism industry, influencing women managers to reassess their career dedication and work-life balance. However, it has notably enhanced their notion of self-awareness and being respected both at work and in society. At the same time, it has increased their sense of flexibility and compassion, building a less strict professional self identity.

Figure 4 illustrates the theoretical implications of this research. The outer black layer shows how the women in tourism management approached their self-descriptive narratives. The second layer in light grey highlights the key factors they used to describe themselves as managers. The dark grey layers represent the factors identified as their strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, the minus (-) and plus (+)
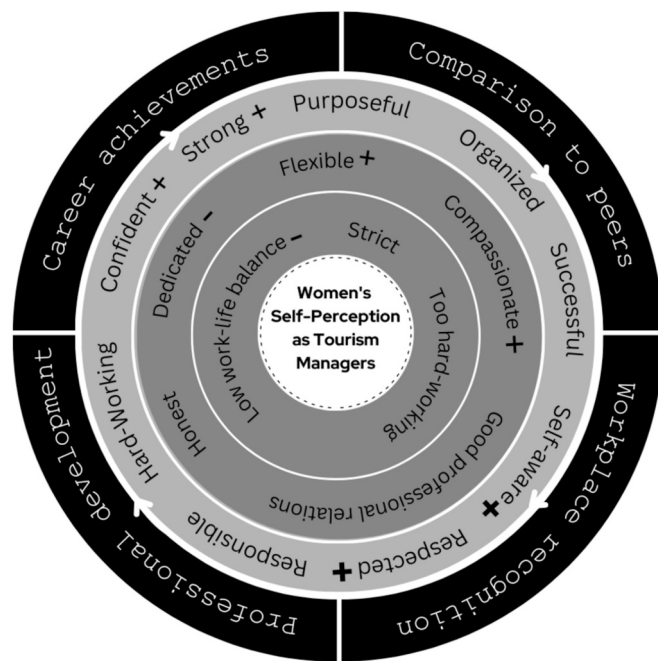
Fig. 4. Theoretical implications framework.

Self-perception defining approaches ▢ Preeminent factors ▢ Strengths and weaknesses −/+ The influence of the social movement. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

symbols indicate whether these self-descriptive narratives were influenced by the occurrence of the Social Movement. Notably, the two adjectives with larger plus symbols (self-aware and respected) were not prominently used by them before the Social Movement but appeared in their narratives afterward.

5.2. Practical implications

Understanding the positive influence of social movements on women's self-awareness, confidence, and compassion underscores the importance of supporting and amplifying such movements. Organizations and leaders can actively engage with these societal shifts to create environments that empower women, foster inclusive leadership, and promote positive self-perception among women in managerial positions. This recognition also highlights the need for ongoing efforts to challenge gender stereotypes and biases, fostering an organizational culture that encourages women to embrace their strengths and contribute effectively to managerial roles.

Conversely, the study's acknowledgment of adverse effects, such as diminished dedication due to industry challenges, emphasizes the need for targeted support mechanisms during periods of societal upheaval. Policymakers can use these findings to design interventions that address the specific challenges faced by women in managerial positions, ensuring that the negative consequences of societal changes are mitigated. Organizations can implement mentorship programs, provide resources for skill development, and offer mental health support to help women navigate uncertainties and sustain their commitment to their careers. In real-life scenarios, this insight can guide organizations, policymakers, and women leaders in understanding the versatile impact of social movements on managerial self-perception.

5.3. Limitations and future research

The lack of previous research on women managers' self-perception in

the field of tourism was one of the motivations behind this research. However, still more studies need to focus women on tourism managers' self-perception from different perspectives, such as different managerial styles and their influence on tourism management. Quantitative statistics could also contribute to the enrichment of data in this regard, especially in lesser-developed countries such as Iran where there are no reliable statistics. Moreover, further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of the Social Movement on the tourism industry and the managerial skills of Iranian women tourism managers.

It is also worth mentioning that gender is a much deeper concept than simply dividing people into one of two groups, either women or men, and a significant number of new studies seek to approach gender from a fluid angle. However, Iran is a society where the notion of gender is still highly traditional with a dominant cultural structure, thus undertaking further research from a broader gender perspective would be challenging. Nevertheless, future research could attempt to address tourism management and self-perception using a more inclusive gender approach.

Finally, participants in this investigation demonstrated a shift in their chosen language and an intention to use less sexist and discriminatory language when talking about themselves and other women in their sphere. After the Social Movement, visible changes in attitude, speech style, and chosen language were found among the respondents. For instance, before the Movement some interviewees expressed that their women employees were "too sensitive and spoiled"; but after the Movement, they tended to avoid using such negative terms. Before the Social Movement, a number of them had used the phrase "I am like a man" when referring to themselves as strong or powerful. However, in the second round of interviews, they tried to steer clear of this phrase, or they corrected themselves by saying "No, not like a man, I am a strong woman". In general, they used less sexist language throughout the whole interview. These observational findings require further research and analysis from psychological, sociological, and anthropological angles to contribute to the larger work on women's leadership in tourism.

Declaration of generative AI in writing

During the preparation of this work, the authors used the ChatGPT generator to edit or check the comprehension of some phrases. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Parastoo Moghaddam: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Daniel Blasco Franch:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Natàlia Ferrer-Roca:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Appendix A. Interview guideline

A.1. General introduction

Necessary and general introductions are provided to participants to ensure they fully understand the study and give informed consent. They are informed about their rights, the privacy protocols in place to protect their data, and how their participation will remain confidential.

Participants are asked to: introduce themselves and give a brief overview of their careers to provide context for the interview.

A.2. Research questions

- How do you perceive yourself as a manager/leader/supervisor?
- (additional alternative questions)
- How do you perceive your management skills?
- What are the essential management/leadership skills for you? How do you evaluate your management skills? How do you evaluate yourself as a tourism manager?
- How would you describe yourself as a tourism manager/leader/ supervisor?

A.3. After the beginning of the social movement

- Has there been any changes in your general self-perception of what kind of a manager you are?
- Do you perceive any changes specifically in your leading/management skills?

A.4. Termination protocol of the interview

The participants' collaboration is appreciated and they are kindly requested to introduce potential participants to the research team (with the specific characteristics provided by the research team).

Appendix B. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2024.101335.

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