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A Gendered Lens to Platformisation in Tourism and Hospitality: Developing a Conceptual Framework from a Worker's Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The rapid platformisation of tourism and hospitality (T&H) is reshaping work, yet for many workers this digital transformation deepens existing vulnerabilities rather than dismantling them. Platforms now colonise recruitment, task allocation, and algorithmic management in a sector already defined by precarity and a workforce disproportionately composed of young people, women, and migrants. While the European Institute for Gender Equality warns that platforms can both advance gender equality and entrench sexism, scholarship has yet to theorise how these contradictions unfold in T&H. We employ a critical review methodology to construct an original conceptual framework integrating platformisation, gender, and wellbeing as mutually constitutive dimensions of T&H labour. The framework recasts digital transformation not as neutral progress but as a contested site of power, where value co-creation for platforms, firms and customers may coincide with value co-destruction for workers. It offers scholars a new lens for theorising tourism work futures, and policymakers a diagnostic tool for ensuring platformisation supports decent work, wellbeing and equity.

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Introduction

The tourism and hospitality (T&H) sector is experiencing a profound digital transformation, fuelled by data-intensive, AI-enabled, and platform-mediated technologies that, the industry says, will allow the T&H sector to achieve better outcomes in terms of financial performance, competitiveness, quality of service, resource utilisation, flexibility,

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and innovation. While these technologies seem to promise efficiency, flexibility, and innovation, they also introduce new forms of labour control with opaque managerial operations (Wood, 2025), raising questions about the impact of platforms and algorithmic management on T&H workers and their well-being.

This paper examines the relationship between platformisation, gender, and worker wellbeing in T&H through a critical, intersectional lens. The paper presents a conceptual model to frame the impacts of the complex and often invisible mechanisms of labour control in an increasingly technologically driven era on T&H workers' wellbeing. In building a conceptual framework that advances understandings of T&H worker experiences, specifically in relation to platformisation, wellbeing and gender, the paper helps to illustrate the positive and negative transformative effects of T&H platformisation, highlights the complexities arising from this platformisation, and promotes further exploration in this area. In doing so, it places T&H worker wellbeing in the principal position of a conceptual framework that explores both value co-creation and co-destruction (understood as the negative impacts on workers' wellbeing) in platform-mediated labour (Buhalis et al., 2020).

In this paper, we use platformisation to describe the spread of platform logics (i.e. algorithmic matching, ratings and ranking, automated performance control, and datafication) across T&H ecosystems, including settings that are not platforms in a strict, intermediary sense. This distinction matters as not all digital systems deployed in T&H meet classic definitions of platforms and the term *platforms* is not always 100% correct, even though web services, software systems and sharing economy apps are often called or classed as platforms (ILO, 2021). For example, Constellation is better described as a company-managed flexible workforce programme supported by digital infrastructure, and not a digital platform in a pure/traditional sense. In addition, it is embedded within a large corporate structure, which contends with classical definitions of digital labour platforms. T&H Gig work websites like Airbnb Experiences are classified by the ILO as digital labour platforms, which can be of two types: online web-based platforms and location-based platforms (ILO, 2021). However, Airbnb, according to ILO, is classified as an *other digital services platform* (Rental goods and assets). Similarly, Flexkeeping is a hospitality operations management software that coordinates internal workflows (house-keeping, maintenance, communication) and enables algorithmic management and surveillance; it is not a market intermediary in the traditional platform sense. We come back to this later in the paper but for conceptual clarity in this paper, we adopt a concise, realistic definition of platform: "a digital platform is a service, enabled by software, that is offered to intermediate the interaction between agents" (Derave et al., 2024, p. 6).

What permeates all these different types of platformisation and digitisation in the T&H sector is limited attention to how they facilitate gender and other intersecting inequalities, to impact vulnerable workers. In this paper, we define three categories of T&H platforms to be able to address how they impact workers, recognising, as we say above and later in the paper that they are not strictly platforms according to current ILO and OECD definitions. These are: (1) *labour platforms* – that connect service providers with customers and include T&H gig work platforms (e.g. Airbnb Experiences) and other digital services platforms (e.g. Airbnb); (2) *surveillance platforms* – that conduct (biometric) surveillance of workers during their shifts and include hospitality operations management software

companies (e.g. Flexkeeping); and (3) *recruitment platforms* – that recruit workers for hotels, restaurants, and events and include recruitment AI technologies (e.g. Retorio) and company-managed flexible workforce programmes (e.g. Constellation).

These platforms promise flexibility and innovation, yet they intersect with longstanding labour challenges in the sector, characterised by high levels of precarity, seasonality, and the overrepresentation of young people, women, and migrant workers in low-paid, non-standard employment. These disadvantaged groups often lack voice, representation, and access to decent working conditions and there is growing evidence to suggest that digital platforms may exacerbate existing inequalities, particularly for women, by normalising precarious work as meaningful and acceptable (Bakas & Salman, 2024). The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE, 2022) warns that while labour platforms have the potential to advance gender equality, they may also reinforce systemic sexism and deepen vulnerabilities. Furthermore, economists say that “Platforms amplify the precarity that has already existed in the labour market” (van Doorn et al., 2025, p. 508) and stress that the evolving financing, product, and labour market strategies of specific firms shape regulatory and worker struggles in national and/or local settings.

The role of gender in configuring tourism worker experiences is essential in our analysis. Gender is understood here not as a fixed attribute of individual workers, but as a socially constructed system of meanings, expectations and power relations through which particular behaviours, identities, skills and forms of labour come to be perceived as feminine or masculine. Following Ahl (2006, p. 597), gender is therefore treated as “something that is ... performed rather than something that is”, because it is reproduced through everyday practices, workplace norms and institutional arrangements. This conceptualisation is important for T&H because service work is often organised around gendered expectations of care, emotional labour, flexibility, appearance, availability and compliance. Gender is thus understood here as a broader system of power, rather than a single, isolated attribute of individual T&H workers’ bodies. Whilst some research has been done into how the tourism platform economy is configuring the tourism labour market relations (Poutanen & Kovalainen, 2017) and the changing face of labour (Reid-Musson et al., 2020), very limited research exists into how gender roles are influencing and being influenced by this new tourism work environment and the impacts of this on tourism worker wellbeing.

Finally, drawing on the ILO’s definition of decent work (ILO, n.d.), worker wellbeing is positioned as central to understanding the implications of digitisation. Worker wellbeing refers here to the extent to which work conditions support dignity, security, autonomy, and voice, and recognising that these outcomes are structurally shaped by labour regimes rather than solely individual experiences. Despite the growth of platforms, termed here as platformisation, research focusing on workers’ perspectives remains limited (Iranmanesh et al., 2022) and long-standing definitions of *work*, *workers*, *managers*, and *employers* now position platform workers as somehow outside the analytical gaze of tourism labour studies (James, 2024). In presenting a conceptual model, this paper aims to understand both value co-creation and co-destruction in platform-mediated labour, highlighting how the same technologies that enable flexibility and opportunity can also generate precarity, surveillance, and exclusion. In doing so, the paper contributes to emerging debates on platformisation by advancing a gender-sensitive, wellbeing-oriented perspective on digital transformation in the sector.

Literature review

Wellbeing of workers in T&H

Wellbeing in T&H work is far from self-evident and remains difficult to capture conceptually and empirically. Dominant institutional frameworks, such as that of the OECD (2022), define wellbeing in aspirational terms as the capacity to live the lives individuals value, supported through health, financial security, work–life balance and social inclusion. However, such formulations sit uneasily against the empirical realities of T&H labour, which is widely characterised by precarity, strain, and dispossession. Jobs in hospitality and service are frequently marked by long and unpredictable hours, low wages, physical fatigue and heightened emotional demands. These burdens are not equally distributed: they fall disproportionately on women, young people, and migrant and racialised workers whose labour, although central to the functioning of the experience economy, is structurally undervalued and often rendered invisible (Baum, 2012; Carvalho et al., 2019; Lugosi & Ndiuini, 2022).

Much of the existing literature has tended to privilege individualised outcomes, focusing on stress, burnout, absenteeism and other psychological indicators (Ciarlante et al., 2024; Wong et al., 2024), often at the expense of attending to the structural and institutional conditions through which harm is produced and sustained. More recent contributions have sought to broaden this scope, developing multidimensional understandings of wellbeing which include dignity, autonomy, authenticity and purpose (Costa et al., 2017; Filep et al., 2024; Mellors & Gaspar, 2025; Rydzik et al., 2017; Sirgy, 2019). This shift is significant, recognising that wellbeing cannot be reduced to the absence of harm but must be understood as a relational, embodied and political state, shaped by labour regimes and the sociocultural contexts in which work is situated (Kwok, 2022; Ladkin et al., 2023; Mellors & Gaspar, 2025).

Central to these regimes is the design and organisation of work. Models such as Job Demands–Control–Support have demonstrated how high emotional intensity combined with limited autonomy and inadequate organisational support erodes wellbeing across T&H settings (Ariza-Montes et al., 2018). Emotional labour, while frequently celebrated within branding and service literature, is rarely experienced by workers as a source of empowerment (Liu & Huang, 2025). Instead, it often entails the compulsory performance of sociability, patience and care under conditions that offer little reciprocation or recognition. Managerial interventions such as High-Performance Work Systems have sought to alleviate these pressures through training, worker involvement and recognition (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020). Yet such practices are often primarily instrumental, oriented towards productivity gains rather than the cultivation of sustainable or ethical workplaces. In contrast, approaches which prioritise worker agency, including participatory work and job redesign, demonstrate more transformative potential. As Bansal et al. (2025) argue, where workers are directly involved in reshaping their roles and influencing organisational arrangements, wellbeing is not simply managed but reclaimed, with the workplace becoming a site where values, voice and purpose are actively articulated. This is further reinforced by Amissah et al. (2022), who show how emotional labour and exhaustion directly shape job satisfaction in hospitality contexts.

Taken together, this literature suggests that wellbeing in T&H cannot be reduced to a single metric or narrowly defined outcome. Instead, it can be conceptualised as comprising at least five interrelated dimensions distilled from existing debates. First, physical security reflects ILO definitions of decent work (ILO, [n.d.](#)) and longstanding concerns with fatigue, unpredictable scheduling, and unsafe conditions (Baum, [2012](#); Carvalho et al., [2019](#)). Second, psychological health builds on a tradition of research into stress, burnout and absenteeism (Ciarlante et al., [2024](#); Wong et al., [2024](#)) but is broadened by work highlighting how emotional labour and exhaustion and more recent concerns around technostress and digital wellbeing undermine job satisfaction (Amissah et al., [2022](#); Stankov & Gretzel, [2021](#)). This is especially relevant when we consider platformisation in T&H as research is beginning to illustrate how familiarity with AI impacts workers' abilities to cope with their new – digitally transformed – work regimes. Third, autonomy and voice draws from Job Demands–Control–Support models (Ariza-Montes et al., [2018](#)) and critiques of the *ideal tourism worker* which highlight gendered expectations of flexibility and silence (Costa et al., [2017](#); Rydzik et al., [2017](#)). Fourth, purpose and value alignment emerges from recent interest in authenticity and dignity as essential to worker flourishing (Filep et al., [2024](#); Mellors & Gaspar, [2025](#); Sirgy, [2019](#)). Finally, relational belonging reflects the sociological turn to intersectionality and inclusion, where recognition and mattering are central to workers' lived experience (Rydzik et al., [2017](#)).

These five dimensions and the wellbeing of T&H workers more generally impact and are impacted by the wider platformisation of the T&H sector and by existing gender roles, which is discussed in more detail next.

Platformisation

Whilst we have problematised platforms earlier and will do so again later in the paper, it is still necessary to understand their shifting role in the T&H sector. A platform “brings together economic agents and actively manages network effects between them” (Belleflamme & Peitz, [2021](#), p. 29). A key attribute of a platform is the multisided participation of the various stakeholders in it – customers and sellers, employers and workers, advertisers, and target audiences, etc. Due to this multisided nature, platforms experience a network effect as the platform value increases exponentially when user numbers increase (Belleflamme & Neysen, [2023](#)). For example, when there are more hotels in a booking platform, potential customers are more likely to use it because they have more choice, making it more likely to find a property that fits their preferences. At the same time, the more customers that use the booking platform, the more attractive it becomes for hotels to be present on it. Hence, a positive feedback loop is established in which the more users utilise the platform, the higher its value for each of them. Simultaneously, platforms boast high economies of scale because the increase in the number of users decreases the platform's costs per user and users' costs per interaction make platforms even more attractive for their users. This nature of platforms means that the wellbeing of users is not prioritised, as seen in research on the negative effects on worker wellbeing in the context of dark kitchens (Giousmpasoglou et al., [2024](#)).

These models of digital platforms are at the core of various business models connecting tourists, workers, businesses, and government institutions (Ivanov, [2020](#)). Within the T&H sector, platforms: (1) recruit workers for hotels, restaurants, and events (e.g.

Constellation, Coople, and Hosco) and train T&H workers (e.g. <https://tourismskillslab.eu/>); (2) connect service providers with customers (e.g. Booking.com, Airbnb, FairBnB); and (3) conduct algorithmic and biometric surveillance of workers during their shifts (e.g. flexkeeping and hotelkit housekeeping).

Platforms offer various advantages for their users. They facilitate the relationships between the different groups of users and decrease the associated transaction costs (Golovanova et al., 2024). For many users, platform membership is free while platforms earn commissions or fees for the services they provide (e.g. online booking platforms). Although the commissions/fees may sometimes look high and cause tension among users, they are lower than the direct marketing and transactions costs users would make outside the platform to reach the same marketing objectives. Platforms also improve the efficiency of companies by facilitating easier connections between them and their customers, improving communication and collaboration. The expanded reach provided by platforms allows T&H companies to access larger audiences (Ivanov, 2020). Additionally, by connecting numerous service providers and service users, platforms increase competition among their users but also increase the likelihood that users find the service that fits their needs and preferences. They also enable dynamic pricing (Tong et al., 2020) and personalised offers based on the data analytics insights platforms provide.

At the same time, platforms increase the market power of their owners (Balsiger et al., 2023). The strong network effect means that few platforms concentrate a large number of users. In the tourism context, where SMEs dominate the business landscape, several booking platforms have a dominating power and control a high share of bookings (Statista, 2024). Additionally, platforms stimulate the gig economy, which creates flexible working times but may lead to precarity, poverty, and insecurity (Anwar & Graham, 2021). People use platforms to implement short-term jobs related to food delivery (e.g. Glovo) or transportation (e.g. Uber) as contractors rather than workers and bear the risks and costs (e.g. insurance, social security, etc.) associated with the work.

Moreover, many platforms utilise algorithms to streamline the housekeeping processes in hotels or other back-of-office work (Jianu et al., 2025). Algorithmic management platforms used by T&H enterprises can significantly enhance operational efficiency, for example by controlling the time spent by cleaners cleaning a hotel room. T&H managers use algorithmic management platforms to optimise resource allocation by creating dynamic scheduling systems that can adjust workers' shift patterns in real-time based on fluctuating customer demand (Wu et al., 2024), which is especially critical during peak hours or special events. This ensures that resources are deployed where they are needed most, thereby increasing productivity (Diwan, 2025).

However, this can have a negative impact on worker wellbeing. Qualitative research on the effects of AI-driven human resource (HR) systems on hotel workers' perceptions of wellbeing (Turčinović et al., 2025) found that workers managed by these platforms expressed anxiety over the depersonalisation of management and the erosion of human discretion in decision-making, viewing AI systems as rigid and inflexible, unable to capture the nuances of individual performance or the complexities of day-to-day hotel operations. This can foster feelings of alienation and a lack of autonomy for T&H workers, especially when there is a lack of transparency and clarity of how algorithms reach particular decisions. Also, recent qualitative research with hospitality workers in

the UK indicates that while technology is meant to introduce efficiencies, workers report having more, and not less, work to do, and work is becoming more intense (Rydzik, 2026). This increased pressure felt by workers affects their wellbeing and increases stress. So, T&H platforms relating to HR management should not be seen as a neutral tool, but as a force that can undermine morale, strain interpersonal dynamics, and contribute to burnout or attrition. Ethical questions about fairness and biases (Ivanov & Umbrello, 2021) and privacy concerns (Femenia-Serra et al., 2022) about T&H algorithmic management platforms are pertinent to ensure worker wellbeing.

Some research has been done into how the tourism platform economy is configuring the tourism labour market relations. Researchers question how gender roles are influencing the wellbeing of workers who find themselves in this new technological tourism work environment. Gender differences in worker wellbeing have been widely acknowledged (Pugliesi, 1995) as being due to differential exposure and vulnerability to social roles, moving to an analysis of the effect of gender traditionalism on psychological wellbeing (Sweeting et al., 2014). More recent research indicates that technology is transforming the impact of gender roles on worker wellbeing, as, for example, the *always-on culture* blurs the boundaries between work and personal life, thereby increasing the risk of burnout, mental fatigue, and declining job satisfaction (Akbar et al., 2025), leading us to question what is happening at the interface of worker wellbeing, gender, and platforms.

Gender lens to platform tourism work

Despite the important insights offered by the tourism gender literature (Alarcón & Cole, 2019), limited research exists on the tourism technologies and gender equality interface, which is surprising considering the important role that technology plays in tourism. Amid the current transformation occurring in tourism, and the emergence of automation technology and AI in the industry (Solakis et al., 2024), a need has been identified to discuss the relationship between tourism technologies and gender roles (Webster & Farmaki, 2025). The rise of platform-mediated T&H work makes it essential to better understand this relationship (gender-tourism labour-technology) and unpack the underlying causes of inequality, how they relate to wider social, cultural, economic, and political considerations, and the relationship between platformisation, T&H workers, and wellbeing.

Gender can be considered society's "most pervasive organising principle" (Ahl & Nelson, 2010, p. 7) because it shapes access to resources, roles, identities, and power relations across social, economic, and cultural domains, making it crucial to investigate in social studies of tourism. Gender roles refer to socially constructed expectations and norms regarding appropriate behaviours, identities, and responsibilities, which are reinforced through repeated social practices and become internalised over time as naturalised ways of being (Wood & Eagly, 2010). This understanding builds on the conceptualisation introduced above by treating gender as something embedded in labour processes, organisational practices and technological systems, rather than as a simple worker characteristic. To paraphrase Butler (2000), gender is constituted through repeated everyday performances, such as the ways individuals speak, move, and act, which come to be understood as feminine or masculine. Understanding gender roles as socially constructed and ultimately "something that is ... performed rather than

something that is” (Ahl, 2006, p. 597) helps to better explain how gender roles exert diverse influences on tourism workers and impact on their wellbeing.

Gender in tourism labour scholarship has moved beyond empowerment discourses towards more nuanced understandings of how gender roles and economic roles interact within the tourism arena (Cole, 2018). This shift is particularly relevant in the context of platform-mediated work, where technological transformations interact with existing labour structures and gendered inequalities. Platforms should not be understood as neutral technological infrastructures but as socio-technical systems embedded within gendered power relations (Maier & Gilchrist, 2022; Mellors & Egdell, 2025). Platform design, algorithmic management, rating systems, and customer interactions may therefore reproduce or reconfigure gender inequalities by shaping access to opportunities, working conditions, autonomy, and exposure to risk. Examining platformisation through a gender lens thus enables analysis of how technological transformations combine with structural labour inequalities to produce differentiated wellbeing outcomes for workers.

While the word gender does not equate to women, it is interesting to note that in the EU, in 2020 there were fewer female platform workers (42%) than men (58%). However, more recently the number of women in platform work has increased (EIGE, 2022). The flexibility and autonomy of some types of platform work, such as Airbnb Experiences, which offer income supplementation or full-time earning potential, can make such work attractive to many (McDonald et al., 2020). This perceived flexibility can make some platform work socially acceptable for some women to engage in while still adhering to feminine caring roles of balancing family-care responsibilities (Costa et al., 2017). At the same time, such flexibility may also reinforce gendered divisions of labour and precarity by normalising unpaid care expectations and fragmented employment patterns, particularly where women turn to platform participation as a strategy of economic survival within constrained labour market conditions (Maier & Gilchrist, 2022). Gender’s influence is present in the whole T&H platform ecosystem, ranging from the workers to the IT companies, to the employers to the customers. This highlights the need to examine platformisation as a gendered socio-technical process rather than purely an economic or technological shift. The following sections therefore proceed to analyse how the T&H platforms defined earlier intersect with gender roles and biases to impact worker wellbeing.

Types of platforms

Here, we better define the types of T&H platforms we are analysing in this paper, which were referred to in the introduction: (1) *labour platforms* – that connect service providers with customers and include T&H gig work platforms (e.g. Airbnb Experiences) and other digital services platforms (e.g. Airbnb); and (2) *surveillance platforms* – that conduct (biometric) surveillance of workers during their shifts and include hospitality operations management software companies (e.g. Flexkeeping); and (3) *recruitment platforms* – that recruit workers for hotels, restaurants, and events and include recruitment AI technologies (e.g. Retorio) and company-managed flexible workforce programmes (e.g. Constellation).

Labour platforms

Labour platforms are understood here as “digital infrastructures that enable two or more groups to interact” (Srnicsek, 2017, p. 30), which connect service providers with customers

and include T&H gig work platforms and other digital services platforms, such as Withlocals (connects tourists to tour guides), Uber (a ride-hailing app) and Bounce (connects tourists to luggage storage providers).

In many parts of the world, informal or task-based work has long been the norm, with digital platforms representing a new mechanism for coordinating and governing such labour. In fact, taking on multiple short-term gigs has been common practice for workers long before the emergence of the platform economy (Lobel, 2017). However, the scale, algorithmic management, and employment classifications associated with platform companies have created new regulatory challenges, leaving policymakers still grappling with how to address worker protections. It is also important to recognise that the gig workforce is not homogenous. For example, an undocumented worker who is renting an Uber cab licence from another marginalised driver occupies a very different position within the platform economy compared with a highly mobile digital nomad contributing to urban gentrification in cities such as Lisbon. The geographical context is important as platforms develop differently in different countries. In South-East Asia, gig-workers' income is dispersed by financial services in the same app, making them dependent on the platform. Hence, the intersection of labour and financial credit provisions is an emerging aspect of labour control in the platform economy, particularly in countries where many workers lack access to traditional banking services (van Doorn et al., 2025).

When looking at research on platforms that connect service providers with customers, a lack of attention to how platforms deal with gendered concerns may increase the experiences of workers with gender-based violence and precarious working conditions. Claims surrounding flexible, family-friendly work possibilities in the platform economy are widespread (James, 2024). While platforms are sold as an emancipatory working opportunity where women can juggle children and childcare with paid work more flexibly, in practice, this often involves no provision of social benefits, discrimination, and dependence on platform ratings (van Doorn et al., 2025). An example of this is seen in research on women in Istanbul, Turkey offering everyday tourism experiences via platforms like Airbnb Experiences (Bakas & Salman, 2024). Research finds that when working on these platforms, these women often normalise gendered harassment and avoid complaining about harassment so as not to ruin their good customer ratings. This is compounded by the limited workplace security offered by platforms, as workers are seen as freelancers who "ensure their own safety". Gender-based harassment can also emerge from gig platforms as the type of relationships between client and service provider (or tourist-host) is changing in the new platform work context. The work-client relationship is now blurred by informality and ambiguity.

This new working environment is potentially unsafe, threatening T&H workers' physical and psychological wellbeing as platforms extend the "reach of labour subsumption into spheres traditionally considered outside the employment relation" (Castellini, 2019, p. 63), while also shaping how workers regulate and present their identities in response to platform norms and market expectations (Mellors & Egdell, 2025). It is important to analyse how gender impacts T&H platform workers' wellbeing as human experience is informed by our understandings of the social constructs that ultimately shape our realities, such as feelings of safety in public space. Research shows that female tourism platform-mediated micro-entrepreneurs limit their productive activity to certain spaces and times of day,

indicating a continuation of the expression of spatial patriarchy in public spaces. Feminist geographers talk about female travellers experiencing *fear-induced gendered immobility* (Zhang et al., 2022); however, research finds that tourism gig platforms, boosted by the increased demand for capitalist accumulation, are encouraging the mobility of women into the public space by offering tourism experiences via a platform, but that certain public spaces still carry with them a price: that of fear. This normalisation of fear for women working in T&H platforms speaks to how platforms are manufacturing “appropriate individuals” (Jianu et al., 2026, p. 11). Platform-based normative control is creating workers whose self-identity and values align with organisational goals, transforming expectations such as flexibility and responsiveness into indicators of individual worth, facilitating extreme forms of self-exploitation (e.g. Uber drivers urinating in bottles, food-delivery riders crossing red lights).

T&H gender-and-platform literature on the positive effects of platforms on workers, is heavily dominated by studies drawing on Airbnb data, because it is easily scrappable. For example, research finds that the majority of Airbnb hosts are women (58%) indicating that certain platforms can provide women with accessible working opportunities. Other Airbnb research (Ert et al., 2025) shows that female hosts earn more than males, attributed to guest preference for female hosts combined with Airbnb’s market mechanism. Also, platforms as service providers tend to treat male and female users comparatively more equal and introduce policies to prevent discrimination, such as Airbnb’s response to anti-discrimination concerns (Farmaki & Kladou, 2020). Most platforms, however, like ride-hailing and food-delivery apps, are gender-agnostic (Ma et al., 2022), and adding more gender-aware elements into the design could potentially improve their sensitivity to gender inclusivity.

Surveillance platforms

Algorithmic management systems are becoming increasingly common in the T&H sector, operating within surveillance platforms. Often used to assign tasks, evaluate performance and enhance efficiencies, these tools are seen as surveillance rather than optimisation by workers who can find it difficult to understand how decisions about their work are made (Mantilla-León et al., 2024). Hospitality workers including housekeepers and reception staff can be impacted by this. For instance, reception staff may be measured and assessed on the speed of the check-in process. However, this is often at odds with company mandates around personalised service (Spektor et al., 2023), creating tensions between performance metrics and the relational and emotional labour that is disproportionately expected from women in customer-facing roles. For housekeeping, which is often a feminised task, algorithmic surveillance, such as tracking the location of housekeepers, is often couched in terms of the safety of the housekeeper. Yet, this tracking can also be used by management to surveil housekeepers by noting how long it takes to clean rooms or track how and where they move through the hotel (Spektor et al., 2023). Such practices may intensify work pace, reduce autonomy, and reinforce historically gendered expectations of compliance, docility, and productivity within feminised service roles. These kinds of digitised surveillance methods risk disrupting established worker rights and protections and moving the tourism sector away from ideals of decent work (Rydzik & Kissoon, 2024), while also potentially exacerbating gendered inequalities

where workers have limited bargaining power or are concentrated in lower-paid, precarious roles.

Recruitment platforms

Technology and new trends are transforming the way people are finding work, and platforms that recruit T&H workers to work in hotels, restaurants, and events are proliferating due to the high demand for short-term, seasonal workers in the tourism industry. A study of HR professionals representing 500 mid-sized organisations from a range of industries in five different countries found that 24% of businesses have already implemented AI for recruitment purposes and 56% of hiring managers plan to adopt it in the next year (Sage, 2020). These platforms either connect workers to clients via an app such as Constellation in the UK or are used in hotels to scan thousands of applications and assist in the hiring process. They act as mediators, attracting and selecting self-employed platform workers, managing and profiting from labour-capital relations without being employers (Williams et al., 2023). As platforms reconfigure the roles and responsibilities of human resource management, there is an impact on workers' experiences (Nannelli et al., 2023). First, the ambiguous allocation of responsibility for worker protection, where platforms position themselves primarily as intermediaries, can leave workers exposed to various gendered risks, including gender-based violence. Secondly, recruiting platforms can be inherently gender biased. Past research on human recruitment practices finds that tourism managers often have inherent recruitment gender biases: for example, that female tourism workers are less flexible and available than male colleagues (Costa et al., 2017).

Traditional ways of hiring, i.e. humans assessing other humans, are becoming a thing of the past and now it is AI recognition technology systems that make judgements and select the best candidates for the job (El Hajal & Yeoman, 2025). AI has been criticised as being trained on texts containing inherent gender bias, e.g. Siri who was created as a subservient female, and this translates into potential gendered selections (Marinucci et al., 2023). Also, AI systems often misunderstand what gender and race are, casting them as isolatable attributes rather than broader systems of power, thus rendering systems unable to remove gender and race from the recruitment process (Drage & Mackereth, 2022). AI's claims to debias the hiring process functions as a denial, rather than an actual erasure, of the material and structural differences faced by individual job candidates. The denial of difference functions as a mechanism of power. Assuming that workers are a homogeneous group risks obscuring the inequalities that shape their experiences and can reproduce existing power relations. This is especially important in relation to recruitment AI, which has produced harmful outputs that disproportionately affect workers, including the notorious case of Amazon's sex-discriminatory hiring tool (Dastin, 2018). Another element which is hard to quantify, especially in T&H, is that problems also exist in terms of the actual programmers' inherent gender biases as found in qualitative research on AI-rec-tech system vendors (Collett, 2024).

These examples illustrate how the three types of platforms under analysis impact T&H workers' wellbeing on various levels, and even how the technology itself that is used in the digitisation of T&H work is biased and can exacerbate gendered challenges faced by T&H workers, potentially with negative impacts on their wellbeing.

Method

This paper adopts a critical review methodology (Grant & Booth, 2009), as this approach is well suited to synthesising complex, interdisciplinary, and rapidly evolving bodies of research where the aim is conceptual development rather than exhaustive evidence mapping. Critical reviews differ from traditional systematic reviews in that they prioritise conceptual innovation, theoretical integration, and analytical depth rather than comprehensive coverage or procedural rigidity (Grant & Booth, 2009). This approach is particularly appropriate for examining platformisation and wellbeing in T&H, where scholarship spans multiple disciplines, including labour studies, gender studies, digital economies, and organisational behaviour, and where phenomena are dynamic, context-dependent, and often conceptually fragmented.

Unlike systematic reviews, which aim to minimise subjectivity through standardised protocols, critical reviews recognise the value of interpretive engagement and theoretical synthesis (Cohen & Gössling, 2015). The aim here is not to catalogue all existing studies but to purposively engage with literature that helps interrogate underlying assumptions, identify conceptual tensions, and articulate connections across diverse research traditions. In this vein, the literature was selected and read through theoretically informed lenses, with attention to sources that either provided foundational conceptual framing, such as gender performativity and decent work, or offered empirical insight into how digital transformation, AI, platform work and algorithmic management shape workers' experiences and wellbeing. Sustained engagement with these bodies of literature, triangulation between the researchers across disciplines, and iterative refinement of emerging interpretations prioritised conceptual depth, coherence, and explanatory power. Given the multifaceted nature of platformisation and its implications for worker wellbeing, an overly structured review risked obscuring nuance or excluding relevant yet heterogeneous sources. The critical review method therefore provided the flexibility necessary to explore the interrelationships between platformisation, gender, precarity, and wellbeing in T&H work.

Consistent with interpretive synthesis approaches (Scott & Gössling, 2025), the review was conducted through an iterative and cyclical process of engagement with the literature. It was developed as part of a wider programme of research examining digitalisation, social dialogue, wellbeing and inclusion in T&H work (see <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101178573/en>). Initial searches identified seminal and recent contributions across four intersecting bodies of scholarship: T&H labour and employment, platform labour and algorithmic management, worker wellbeing and decent work, and feminist and gender studies of work and technology. Search terms were combined iteratively around these areas, including T&H, platformisation, platform work, gig work, digital labour platforms, algorithmic management, AI recruitment, digital surveillance, worker wellbeing, decent work, autonomy, voice, precarity, gender, intersectionality and gender-based violence.

Sources were prioritised where they contributed conceptually or empirically to explaining the relationship between platformisation, gender and worker wellbeing, including literature from adjacent service-sector and platform-work contexts where it offered transferable insight for T&H. Literature focused solely on consumer experience, technological adoption, business efficiency or platform performance was not central to the review unless it addressed implications for workers. As themes emerged, they informed

subsequent searches, including backward and forward citation tracing from key texts, allowing the review scope to be refined around the conceptual relationships that underpin the framework. This recursive process ensured that the analysis remained responsive to evolving insights and sensitised to the intersections and contradictions within the literature.

The review was further guided by a phronetic iterative approach (Tracy, 2024). Phronetic iteration involves moving back and forth between empirical evidence, conceptual debates, and prescriptive questions, asking not only what the literature shows but also why it matters, who is affected, and how power and values shape the phenomena under study. This approach was particularly valuable in highlighting the gendered, political, and ethical dimensions of platform work in the T&H sector. It also enabled the integration of literature that might be excluded from more conventional systematic reviews, including conceptual papers, theoretical critiques, policy analyses, and emerging empirical studies.

Through this interpretive, dialogic engagement, the paper synthesises a wide-ranging but purposively bounded body of scholarship, allowing for the identification of key relationships, thematic patterns, and persistent challenges concerning platformisation, gender and worker wellbeing. The analysis was shaped by the disciplinary backgrounds of the authors and reflexive attention from these interdisciplinary perspectives both informed and influenced the selection and interpretation of sources utilised. These processes informed the development of the conceptual framework presented below and brought together ideas intended to stimulate further discussion and guide future research in this area.

Conceptual framework

The critical review draws attention to three interconnected strands: worker wellbeing in T&H, platformisation, and gender. Wellbeing is understood as multidimensional, encompassing physical security, psychological health, autonomy and voice, purpose and value alignment, and relational belonging (Filep et al., 2024; Mellors & Gaspar, 2025). Platformisation refers to the growing use of digital infrastructures that mediate labour relations, creating new forms of recruitment, service provision and algorithmic management (Fernández-Macías et al., 2023). A gender lens demonstrates that these processes are not neutral but shaped by social norms, inequalities and intersectional identities, with uneven effects across the workforce (Costa et al., 2017; Rydzik et al., 2017). This lens is necessary because platforms, algorithms and rating systems may appear technically neutral while still reproducing the gendered assumptions embedded in the labour markets, organisations and datasets from which they emerge.

Taken together, these strands illustrate how platformisation intersects with the dimensions of wellbeing in ways that are mediated through gendered power relations. We recognise that the intensity and form of these effects vary across cultural contexts, regulatory environments, and worker positions within different platform models (e.g. worker versus contractor), and our framework should therefore be understood as a transferable analytical lens rather than a universal model. Thus, it provides the conceptual foundations for examining how, within T&H ecosystems, platformisation both enables and constrains worker wellbeing.

In the framework, gender is not treated as an additional variable to be appended to platformisation, but as a lens that shapes the relationships between stakeholders, technologies and worker wellbeing. It is integrated at three levels: first, through wider gender-related norms and biases that influence T&H companies, customers and IT developers; second, through platform design, datasets, metrics and algorithmic management systems that may encode or amplify these assumptions; and third, through workers' intersectional characteristics, which shape how platformisation is experienced across the five dimensions of wellbeing. This explains why gender-related biases and intersectional characteristics are positioned within the framework rather than treated as external contextual factors.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the impact of platformisation in T&H on the wellbeing of T&H workers from a gender perspective. The framework includes the four stakeholders (the IT companies, T&H companies, T&H workers and T&H customers) and various (bi-directional) relationships between them.

IT companies develop the platforms and the algorithms used in them. T&H companies implement various business processes (strategic management, technology management, operations, finance, human resource management, and marketing). The adoption of platforms with algorithmic management influences the ways T&H companies perform these processes (e.g. how products are priced, how tasks are distributed among workers) and the processes' outputs (e.g. the KPIs of each functional area in the company). If platforms and algorithmic management improve the performance of T&H companies, it makes economic sense for companies to adopt them. At the same time, T&H companies' needs and requirements shape the characteristics of the platforms, their algorithms, and the tasks that can be performed with them. Consistent with our conceptualisation of gender as a socially constructed system of meanings, expectations and power relations, gender-related biases may shape the way T&H companies organise and implement their business processes (e.g. performance metrics that disadvantage caregivers who are predominantly women). The gender-related biases may also infiltrate into the platforms and their algorithms through the IT companies and their workers who are practically doing the coding, as stated earlier, where inherent gender biases were found in AI technology (Collett, 2024). In these ways, platforms and their algorithms can magnify gender-related biases (O'Connor & Liu, 2024) because they create additional instances when these biases are manifested and accentuated. T&H customers are included as vital stakeholders because their usage of the platforms (e.g. due to convenience and price advantage) makes the platforms with algorithmic management attractive to T&H companies.

Moreover, in their interactions, T&H employees and customers co-create well-being for themselves and the others (Buhalis et al., 2020). This means that employees' well-being is directly influenced by customers' behaviour and vice versa, via the compulsory performance of sociability, patience, and care inherent in emotional labour. Consequently, customers are active participants in the value co-destruction process, where consumer benefits sometimes lead to deteriorating employees' wellbeing through exhaustion, stress, and loss of autonomy (Buhalis et al., 2020). The relationship between T&H customers and employees is increasingly mediated by customer-generated rating systems, which serve as a central mechanism of algorithmic control that can reproduce gendered biases and compel female workers to normalise and not report harassment to protect their digital

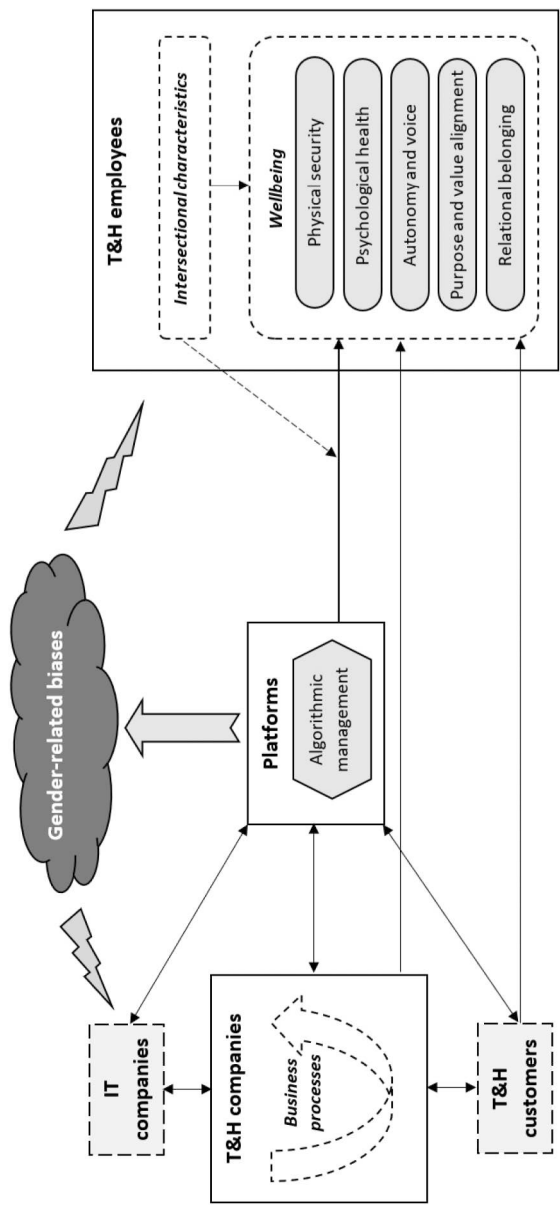


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the relationship between platformisation, T&H workers' wellbeing and gender.

standing (Bakas & Salman, 2024). Hence, integrating customers is thus necessary to accurately map the power dynamics shaping T&H workers' wellbeing.

T&H workers use the platforms as part of their contractual obligations with their employers (the T&H companies). The elements of their wellbeing (i.e. physical security, psychological health, autonomy and voice, purpose and value alignment, and relational belonging) are directly influenced by the way T&H companies implement their business processes (e.g. working conditions, salaries, adherence to safety protocols, etc.), the behaviour of T&H customers (e.g. aggression), and the platforms and their algorithmic management. Here we focus on the algorithmic management part of platforms as an example to illustrate how the framework operates.

Often referred to as the *electronic panopticon*, algorithmic management is associated with a range of negative outcomes, including increased work intensity, elevated anxiety, greater health and safety risks, and an increased likelihood of injuries (Hertel-Fernandez, 2024). In Europe, high levels of algorithmic management are found with 20% of German and 35% of Spanish workers experiencing at least one form of automated allocation or evaluation of their work (Fernández-Macías et al., 2023). Algorithmic management platforms may enhance *physical security* through improved scheduling that prevents overwork of workers (e.g. scheduling sufficient time between tasks) and optimised task allocation among workers (i.e. distributing workload among them) and in time (e.g. urgent tasks have priority; other tasks can wait). However, algorithms that intensify the pace of work or increase productivity expectations may compromise physical wellbeing by increasing the physical and emotional exhaustion of workers (e.g. due to overloading with tasks and the lack of sufficient resting time between them), which may lead to burnout (Mbare et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2025). Regarding *psychological health*, algorithmic management introduces additional psychological stressors including constant surveillance, performance anxiety, algorithmic opacity (not understanding how decisions are made), reduced job security and their effects on job autonomy, perceived fairness, and work intensity (Benlian et al., 2022; Möhlmann et al., 2023). Workers need to know what aspects of their work will be traced, how and for what purposes (Benlian et al., 2022). Algorithmic management may constrain *autonomy and voice* by centralising decision-making in automated systems, limiting worker discretion and autonomy, and prioritising standardisation in decision-making and task implementation over individual judgment (Kinowska & Sienkiewicz, 2023). However, keeping some level of human control over the algorithmic decisions will humanise the algorithmic management and can make decisions more relevant, reliable, usable and human-centric (Jianu et al., 2025). This will keep some degree of worker autonomy and discretion in decision-making and task implementation.

Algorithmic management may enhance or undermine *purpose and value* alignment depending on the way it is implemented. Systems that enable workers to deliver better service through improved worker/task coordination and transparency/access to information may enhance purpose and value alignment because the workers will see how their work contributes to meaningful outcomes (e.g. overall customer satisfaction) and aligns with their values; hence, they may be more engaged and motivated. Conversely, algorithms that reduce work to measurable metrics (e.g. amount of time to implement a task), depersonalise workers' interactions among themselves or with customers (i.e. the platform is the intermediary in the interactions), and prioritise efficiency over quality (e.g. number of food deliveries over the overall satisfaction of customers) will

feel objectified and will be disengaged from their work (Arora et al., 2025). Finally, algorithmic management systems may threaten *relational belonging* by mediating interactions through digital platforms, reducing face-to-face communication, intensifying individual performance monitoring and surveillance, and creating competitive rather than collaborative workplace cultures. Creating a community that allows T&H workers to be active members of the T&H company and interact with other workers even if managed algorithmically may contribute positively to the relational belonging component of workers' wellbeing (Benlian et al., 2022).

T&H workers have specific intersectional characteristics that influence their wellbeing in the workplace and moderate the impacts of algorithmic management on workers' wellbeing. This is where gender enters the framework not simply as a demographic category, but as part of the lived and embodied conditions through which workers encounter platformised labour. As part of this, the knowledge T&H workers may have, through access, or lack thereof, to job opportunities, training, and education, for instance, impacts how they relate to platformisation. For instance, hard skills encompass technical knowledge and task-specific skills such as proficiency with online reservation systems, property management systems, food preparation techniques, financial management tools, etc. In the context of algorithmic management, hard skills include digital literacy, data interpretation capabilities, and the ability to navigate platform interfaces effectively. A worker with well-developed digital skills may find it less stressful to use platforms while the well-developed task-specific skills will help the worker perform the task efficiently, minimising the feelings of overwork and burnout (Zervas & Stiakakis, 2025). On the other side, soft skills comprise interpersonal skills such as communication, empathy, emotional intelligence, cross-cultural understanding, problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability (Ivanova et al., 2025). Soft skills help workers interact better with their colleagues and customers, which directly benefits the relational belonging component of their wellbeing. In the context of algorithmic management, the depersonalisation of the interactions that platforms provide decreases the role of soft skills in the direct task implementation because workers interact mostly with software rather than with a fellow human being.

Nevertheless, workers with high soft skills may be more creative in the implementation of the tasks, be less emotionally affected by algorithmic mistakes, handle stress more efficiently and be more involved in the actual human interactions they will have during the task implementation, which may benefit their psychological wellbeing at the workplace. The intersectionality of workers, especially the gender roles they perform, may influence the way they cope with the stress caused by algorithmic management. For example, studies have identified gendered patterns in digital confidence, technological familiarity and relational work orientations (Ivanov et al., 2023; Su et al., 2009). However, these patterns should not be interpreted as innate differences between men and women. Rather, they reflect gendered socialisation, occupational segregation, unequal access to digital training, and workplace expectations about who should perform technical, relational, or emotional labour. In platformised T&H workplaces, workers in feminised and lower-paid roles may therefore encounter algorithmic management differently, particularly where they have limited access to training, voice, technological support, or bargaining power. The wellbeing effects of algorithmic management are therefore shaped by gendered power relations and intersectional labour market positioning, rather than by fixed male or female characteristics. Going beyond a binary

understanding of gender, we acknowledge the gendered economic, social, and organisational power structures that shape all T&H workers' experiences, including but not limited to women and men.

It should be noted that the workers' wellbeing is influenced by many more factors than discussed in the framework, such as the organisational (i.e. organisation of work within companies, salaries, working conditions, KPIs to measure workers' performance, etc.), personal (e.g. the physical health of the workers), relations with fellow colleagues, and many others (Saito et al., 2025), which go beyond the scope of this paper.

Why the conceptual framework?

The conceptual framework outlined and explained above represents an advancement in understanding the complex and evolving dynamics of platformisation in the T&H sector. By centring the experiences of workers, particularly women, within increasingly digitised and algorithmically managed work environments, the framework offers a critical lens through which to examine the socio-economic, cultural, and technological transformations reshaping labour relations in T&H.

The framework is built upon three core, interrelated pillars: worker wellbeing, platformisation, and gender. Each is essential to understanding the lived realities of T&H workers in the platform economy. The framework's importance lies in its ability to synthesise these domains into a coherent model that not only identifies the mechanisms through which platformisation affects workers but also highlights the relational and intersectional dynamics that shape these impacts. At the same time, the framework also leaves room for adjustment/advancement from future studies around issues of physical health of workers, collegial interaction, and emerging worker wellbeing factors (Saito et al., 2025), including misuse of such platformisation technology and technostress, and other digitally related effects on workers that affect their mental and psychological health (Stankov & Gretzel, 2021).

Worker wellbeing has been conceptualised as multidimensional, encompassing physical security, psychological health, autonomy and voice, purpose and value alignment, and relational belonging (Filep et al., 2024; Mellors & Gaspar, 2025). This approach moves beyond traditional metrics such as stress and burnout (Ciarlante et al., 2024; Wong et al., 2024) to embrace a more holistic understanding of wellbeing. It recognises that wellbeing is not merely the absence of harm, but a relational and political state shaped by labour regimes and socio-cultural contexts (Kwok, 2022; Ladkin et al., 2023). This is important to note in the light of platformisation as a holistic understanding has not traditionally gone hand-in-hand with disruptive technologies such as introducing surveillance platforms into T&H back-of-house sectors.

We have critiqued platformisation in this paper recognising the array of apps, platforms, and websites that have increased the use of digital infrastructures to mediate labour relations, including recruitment, service provision, and algorithmic management (Fernández-Macías et al., 2023). Platforms such as Airbnb, Booking.com, and recruitment apps like Constellation and Coople exemplify the multisided nature of digital platforms, which connect service providers, customers, and employers while managing network effects (Belleflamme & Peitz, 2021). While platforms offer efficiency and expanded market access, they also introduce new forms of algorithmic control and surveillance

that can undermine worker autonomy, intensify precarity (Buhalis et al., 2020), and highlight gender inequalities.

The third dimension is the gender lens, which interrogates how platformisation intersects with gendered power relations. Gender is understood as a pervasive social organising principle (Ahl & Nelson, 2010), and through the framework it can be seen that the lenses of feminist geography and feminist economics illustrate how gender roles interact, often negatively, with economic structures in the tourism labour market (Cole, 2018; Datta et al., 2020). This lens reveals that platform work often amplifies gendered vulnerabilities, such as exposure to harassment, lack of workplace protections, and algorithmic bias in recruitment and task allocation (Costa et al., 2017; Drage & Mackereth, 2022).

The importance of the framework lies in its ability to foreground the worker's wellbeing and perspectives in a sector where labour is often invisible and undervalued. By mapping the relationships between key stakeholders, IT companies, T&H businesses, workers, and customers, the framework illustrates how platformisation can facilitate labour relations and impacts worker wellbeing. It helps identify specific mechanisms, such as algorithmic surveillance, biometric tracking, and AI-driven recruitment, that shape the conditions of work and the distribution of risks and rewards, providing ways in which to better understand Buhalis et al.'s (2020) concepts of value co-creation and co-destruction.

The framework helps question dominant narratives that portray platform work as inherently flexible or empowered by identifying where value co-creation for platforms, firms and customers may coincide with value co-destruction for workers. While some forms of platform work may offer autonomy and income supplementation, especially for women balancing caregiving responsibilities (McDonald et al., 2020), these benefits are often offset by increased precarity, lack of protections, and exposure to gender-based violence (Galán, 2024; Salman & Bakas, 2024). Thus, the framework's emphasis on value co-creation and co-destruction (Buhalis et al., 2020) captures the duality of platformisation to both enhance and erode worker wellbeing.

The framework can have more practical implications too. For policymakers, it offers a tool to assess the impact of digital labour systems on vulnerable worker populations and to design interventions that promote decent work and gender equity (ILO, n.d.; EIGE, 2022). For managers and platform designers, it provides insights into how algorithmic systems can be structured to support rather than undermine worker autonomy, dignity, and inclusion. For researchers, it is hoped the framework serves as the groundwork for future empirical studies that explore the lived experiences of platform workers across different contexts.

More broadly, within the scope of the broader programme the framework aligns with our goal of fostering inclusive and sustainable work environments in the T&H sector. Centring gender and worker experiences within concepts of wellbeing and platformisation provides the base from which our research can develop applications that benefit T&H workers.

Conclusion

This paper has developed a gendered conceptual framework to critically examine the platformisation of T&H work from the perspective of worker wellbeing. In doing so, it responds to a pressing need within tourism scholarship to foreground the lived experiences of workers, particularly women and other marginalised groups – whose labour

underpins the sector yet remains structurally undervalued and increasingly precarious (Baum, 2012; Carvalho et al., 2019; Rydzik et al., 2017).

The critical literature review (Grant & Booth, 2009) underscores that wellbeing in T&H work is not a singular or static concept. Instead, it is multidimensional (Filep et al., 2024; Mellors & Gaspar, 2025; Sirgy, 2019), and these dimensions are deeply embedded in the structures surrounding tourism labour, which are often seen as precarious, emotionally demanding, and disproportionately affecting marginalised groups (Baum, 2012; Carvalho et al., 2019). The rise of platformisation, through algorithmic management, digital surveillance, and its ability to reconfigure labour relations, further complicates these dynamics (Buhalis et al., 2020; Fernández-Macías et al., 2023).

The conceptual framework does not suggest that platformisation is a neutral technological shift, nor does it suggest platforms are easily defined. Instead, it recognises that digital infrastructures are embedded in social and cultural contexts and can help reproduce existing inequalities. A gender lens reveals how platform work often amplifies gendered vulnerabilities, such as exposure to harassment, lack of workplace protections, and algorithmic bias in recruitment and task allocation (Costa et al., 2017; Drage & Mackereth, 2022). These understandings challenge dominant narratives that portray platform work as inherently flexible or empowering and instead call attention to what Buhalis et al. (2020) have called the “dark side” of the sharing economy.

The conceptual framework makes two specific contributions. Theoretically, it advances tourism labour scholarship by showing how platformisation, gender and wellbeing should be analysed as interconnected rather than separate domains. It does this by positioning gender-related biases, platform design, algorithmic management and workers’ intersectional characteristics as connected mechanisms through which wellbeing outcomes are produced. In this way, the framework extends existing debates on value co-creation and co-destruction by identifying how value may be created for platforms, firms and customers while being unevenly experienced by workers through reduced autonomy, intensified surveillance, exposure to harassment or weakened relational belonging.

Practically, the framework offers a diagnostic tool for policymakers, managers and platform designers. It can be used to identify where gendered risks enter platformised T&H work, including recruitment systems, task allocation, customer ratings, surveillance practices, grievance mechanisms and access to training. This points to actionable interventions, including gender-sensitive audits of algorithmic systems, greater transparency over how workers are allocated and evaluated, safeguards against customer harassment, worker voice in platform design and targeted digital training for workers with unequal access to technological skills. These measures would help ensure that platformisation supports, rather than undermines, decent work, wellbeing and equity in the T&H sector.

It is hoped that the framework will open avenues for future research. Whilst one limitation of this model is that it is only applicable to the three types of T&H platform studies within the paper (labour platforms, surveillance platforms, and recruitment platforms), future research could expand this framework by including more types of platforms. Empirical studies could test and refine the framework across diverse geographical and cultural contexts. Further exploration of intersectionality is also important to understand how gender interacts with race, age, migration status, and socio-economic background in shaping platform work experiences (Reid-Musson et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2022). One of the findings of this paper is also that there is a huge gap in research on the

impacts of platform work on gender-based inequalities specifically within T&H sharing economy platforms (other than Airbnb), which cries out to be filled. Finally, future research could investigate the role of platform design and governance in either mitigating or reinforcing inequalities, with particular attention to algorithmic transparency, data ethics, and worker participation in decision-making (Benlian et al., 2022; Kinowska & Sienkiewicz, 2023).

The development of this conceptual framework that is presented is not just a theoretical construct but a call to action. It requires interdisciplinary collaboration between tourism researchers, wider work science and social science researchers, T&H workers, and industry and policymakers to work together to prioritise worker dignity and agency (Mellors & Cole, 2025). With the development of the framework, this paper aims to encourage scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to critically engage with the socio-technical transformations underway in the T&H sector and to ensure that the future of work is not only digital but also just, inclusive, and sustainable.

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Author contributions

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