GUANXI INFLUENCES ON WOMEN INTRAPRENEURSHIP

ABSTRACT

Drawing on the literature examining women intrapreneurship, Chinese *guanx*i and tourism, this article critically explores a theoretical framework for understanding guanxi influences on women intrapreneurship in a non-western and highly patriarchal destination. Through a qualitative analysis of women managers from twenty-four medium and large tourism firms in China, the study provides evidence of Guanxi as socially embedded personal relationships for the exchange of favors, enabling women managers to initiate specific types of women intrapreneurship initiatives in their organizations. The findings reveal how the women managers draw on three forms of *guanxi* (external, within and back-stage) to display intrapreneurial actions as well as the firm-specific factors that constitute important determinants of women intrapreneurship. The managerial implications for encouraging and supporting women intrapreneurs are critically examined.

Keywords: Women intrapreneurship, gender, Confucianism, *guanxi*, China

1. INTRODUCTION

Women intrapreneurship, defined as women demonstrating flexible, risk-oriented and results-oriented traits within firms (Mainiero, Williamson, & Robinson, 1994; Parker, 2011); is attracting attention, particularly as employers are increasingly attaching greater importance to workplace diversity and equality. The socially-constructed understanding of being a woman and how their expected societal roles influence their entrepreneurial practices and strategies with respect to women intrapreneurship is the focus of this article. Previous research on women as tourism workers and entrepreneurs has demonstrated the way in which women construct self-identities to overcome challenges at the workplace and within owner-operated small firms (e.g. Costa et al., 2017; Duffy, Kline, Mowatt, & Chancellor, 2015; Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2016). Our aim here is to extend this argument about the importance of cultural contextualization of women's identity in society through an analysis of women intrapreneurship in a non-western destination, namely China.

The single child policy coupled with China's fast-growing tourism sector have provided 'ideal' conditions and opportunities for nurturing Chinese born female leaders (Huang, 2013a; Yiu, 2017). An increasing number of Chinese women have recently assumed senior management positions, taking over family firms or creating their own businesses within hospitality and tourism, and other sectors. Some reports now suggest that more than fifty percent of all self-made women billionaires globally come from China (Lee, 2017; Huang, 2013a; Yiu, 2017). That notwithstanding, a key stumbling block to achieving full gender parity and closing the gender-pay gap in China which stood at 22% in 2018 is policy orientated (Chenglong, 2018). More than 90% of all employees in China's tourism sector are female, but only around 10% of managerial jobs are occupied by women (Huang, 2013b). Authors such as To (2015) and Fincher (2014) have questioned the efficacy of government initiatives which on the one hand have been geared towards improving gender relations but on the other hand have been structurally discriminating against women by extensively rolling back some of the rights and gains women in China have been experiencing in relation to men.

This paper therefore responds to the long overdue call made by Mainiero et al.'s (1994) for more research aimed at understanding women's career advancing strategies

around intrapreneurship and the support mechanisms that can be developed to enable women to realize their risk-taking and result-oriented aspirations. While management studies have begun addressing this call, as seen in studies of how organizational support can encourage women to become entrepreneurs (Mattis, 2004; Oostenbrink et al., 2012) there is a dearth of tourism research on women intrapreneurship. In this study we focus specifically on how women make use of context-specific networks, especially networks that result in the exchange of mutually beneficial favors, to achieve professional/career advancement (intrapreneurship) within their tourism and hospitality organizations.

Furthermore, in response to the call for indigenous tourism knowledge (Tucker & Zhang, 2016), this article introduces and utilizes the concept of *guanxi* to understand women intrapreneurship in China's tourism sector. The concept of *guanxi* is developed from the Confucian conceptualization of the Chinese as an "interdependent individual" (Hwang, 2000). *Guanxi,* it has been argued, is an essential component of Chinese society. It is integral to business practice in China and enables resources to be allocated and crucial decisions made based on moral obligations and the exchange of favors. Hence *guanxi* is defined here as "creativity and flexibility through a network of personal relationships" (Wong & Tam, 2000, p. 57), containing implicit mutual obligations, assurances, trust and understanding enabling the repeated exchange of favors among the participants of this network (Geddie, Defanco & Geddie, 2005).

The above particularistic relationship is guided by the Chinese consciousness of personhood. Individuals can only be defined co-relationally at any given time and within a social relation e.g. being someone's wife, friend or daughter (Wang, 2013; Wong & Tam, 2000). As *guanxi* is embedded in the Chinese way of life and frames the idea of personhood, it is a useful concept to situate interdependent Chinese women within social networks of relationships. We seek to explicate how these networks of personal relationships (might) engineer trust and thereby enabling the exchange favors or otherwise that contribute to women's professional advancement within their organizations. Through acknowledging the importance of doing *guanxi* and maintaining *guanxi*-based identity for intrapreneurial practices, this study moves traditional gender identity studies to an indigenous Chinese conceptualization of *guanxi* as humanity and personhood.

The term *guanxi* has largely been employed to understand relationship marketing, business set-up, social network and social capital (Geddie, DeFranco, & Geddie, 2005; Xin & Pearce, 1996). Examining *guanxi* from a socio-cultural perspective and its social implications has been relatively limited in management and business research (including tourism). Within the limited socio-cultural *guanxi* studies, Yang, Ryan & Zhang (2014) explore how outsider entrepreneurs maintain harmonious *guanxi* with destination stakeholders. To Chen (2017, p.383), *guanxi* is the "specific manner in which residents dwell in their place." Although both studies recognize the cultural understanding of *guanxi* in China, they do not discuss how the constructed idea of personhood influences individuals' thinking and 'doing' of *guanxi*. More importantly, Chen (2017) argues that the Confucian ideology of *guanxi* is outdated for understanding the modern Chinese way of life. However, there is ample evidence demonstrating that Confucian ideology is witnessing an important resurgence in contemporary China, spearheaded by the current Chinese President Xi Jinping (Xi, 2013; Chinanew.com, 2018). We therefore acknowledge the Confucian influence on *guanxi* and importantly, critically analyze the role of *guanxi* in influencing women intrapreneurship.

A gendered perspective on *guanxi* is virtually absent in tourism, and related management research tends to focus on specific functions of *guanxi* on women's career paths (Scott, Harrison, Hussain, & Millman, 2014), neglecting a holistic view of how different forms of *guanxi* influence women's intrapreneurship (career/professional development) or otherwise. This study thus aims to provide a comprehensive articulation of the multiple ways in which *guanxi* influences women intrapreneurship in medium and large tourism firms in China. It responds to calls for urgent research which will lead to both theory development and managerial interventions on how to address this gender imbalance in China's tourism sector (Yin & Zhang, 2015). Previous gender-focused studies in China have noted the low-paid long working hours in the tourism sector. This often causes fissures in the work-life balance, and limits women's career progression chances (Yang & Peng, 2016), as they often must combine their work with the caring obligations at home. This study explores a key research question: How does Chinese *guanxi* influence women intrapreneurship in medium and large tourism organizations?

In answering the above question, this article makes two important contributions to tourism. First, it theorizes how different forms of *guanxi* (back-stage, external and within) (e.g., Chen, 2017; Chen, Chang, & Lee, 2015; Zhang, Li, & Harris, 2015) influence women intrapreneurship in tourism firms, enabling ambitious career-orientated women to employ *guanxi* as an effective and instrumental enabling mechanism for dealing with impediments to career progression (Chan & Ng, 2016). *Guanxi* influences include the awareness of how expected responsibilities and duties associated with the place and role of women in society defines women managers' strategic behavior and decision-making, and how they utilize own competences to draw on the beneficial opportunities created through *guanxi* to become intrapreneurs.

Second, the article uncovers how tourism firms can promote women intrapreneurship through organizational practices that encourage beneficial forms of *guanxi* to be practiced by women managers who display intrapreneurial traits (innovation, risk, and result and harmony orientation) (Park, 2011). This is evident in the empirical findings, which analyzed twenty-four semi-structured qualitative interviews with women managers and directors in tourism firms (4-5 star hotels, travel/tour companies and theme parks) in China. By focusing on China as a non-western destination, our findings have implications for addressing the under-representation of women in senior management, and the recognition of urgent actions needed to address the high gender pay gap between men and women that is prevalent in emerging tourism destinations (UNWTO, 2019; ILO, 2016; WEF, 2017; Baum, 2013), where extant social and cultural practices/beliefs, still permeate daily social and professional interactions. The next section develops a theoretical framework, followed by a description of the study methods. The findings, discussion and conclusions are presented.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Women intrapreneurship in medium and large size hospitality and tourism firms

Women intrapreneurship is significant in view of calls from academics and policy practitioners to address the widespread gender imbalances in the corporate sector. For example, in 2017 the UK government legislated publication of gender pay gap figures by all employers with 250 or more employees on their public-facing websites while encouraging employers with less than 250 to do so (acas.org.uk, 2017). Norway had been publishing such data since 2001 (WEF, 2018). The law in China, where women earned on average 78.3% of the salary of men in 2018 putting them on a par with UK and the USA, did not mandate equal pay when compared for example to the Scandinavian countries. Chinese women tend to take up jobs in sectors with average work intensity and moderate salaries (e.g. administrative, operational, services and marketing (WEF, 2018; Ming & Yifan, 2019). Extant gender inequality ergo gives credence to calls for medium and large firms to focus on supporting talented women to advance to senior positions (Mattis, 2004). Intrapreneurship also known as corporate entrepreneurship and corporate venturing; "is the practice of developing a new venture within an existing organization, to exploit a new opportunity and create economic value" (Park, 2011, p. 19). While both entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs are credited with enabling innovation, identifying opportunities, pulling together resources and affecting change, intrapreneurs often do not carry financial risk as entrepreneurs do (Smith, Rees, & Murray, 2016).

Existing research on women intrapreneurship has mainly focused on themes such as: gender roles; methods of identifying viable early career women with advancement prospects; influence of self-image; and other motivational factors on decision making among women (Mattis, 2004). Interestingly, there has been very limited research on the role (social) networks play in women intrapreneurship and career advancement in tourism firms. This is notwithstanding the fact that the role of social networks in tourism development has been widely acknowledged as being important in intra/entrepreneurship (e.g. Ngoasong & Kimbu, 2016; Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2016). Within hospitality and tourism, various studies have demonstrated that the challenging working environment in the sector prevents women from further career progression as they are often perceived as being less flexible and risk oriented compared with men (e.g. Costa et al., 2017). Intrapreneurs go beyond conventional limitations and boundaries and take on additional

risks that other employees would not be prepared to consider (Halme, Lindeman, & Linna, 2012).

Within tourism studies, there exist research on the importance of social networks related to women as workers or entrepreneurs (e.g. Duffy et al., 2015; Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2016). However, the discussions have mainly been in relation to issues such as women's agency in challenging gender roles, women and work in tourism, empowerment and emancipation, women as lifestyle and social entrepreneurs (ILO, 2016; Baum, 2013), women's career advancement issues and challenges (Cave & Kilic, 2010), women transitioning from corporate jobs to set up their own entrepreneurial ventures (Mattis, 2004). There is a dearth of research on women intrapreneurship i.e. women being entrepreneurial (in terms of flexibility, innovation and risk-taking) while working (in managerial roles) within established medium and large tourism firms that employ them, to grow their organizations while at the same time advancing their careers, and importantly how their social networks facilitate this process.

2.2 Guanxi influences on women intrapreneurship in tourism

Guanxi is a special type of social relationship, which highlights reciprocal obligations to respond to requests for assistance or favors (Chen, Chen, & Xin, 2004; Xin & Pearce, 1996). Furthermore, it encourages "creativity and flexibility through a network of [mutually beneficial] personal relationships" (Wong & Tam, 2000, p. 57). Hwang (1997) uses the term "interdependent self" to argue that a Chinese individual is defined by their identity and their relationship with others, which is different from the independent self in Western societies. *Guanxi* stems from the Confucian moral principles of benevolence, righteousness, and propriety (in Chinese: 仁, 义, 礼 in Pinyin: *Ren, Yi, Li*), which provide guidelines and regulations for Chinese (including women) operating in a *guanxi*-based system (Chen et al., 2004; Hwang, 1997). Existing literature identifies three forms of *guanxi*-based networks, which we draw upon to as a theoretical starting point to uncovering the formation of women intrapreneurs, namely external, within and back-stage *guanxi*.

2.2.1 External guanxi.

This refers to "business *guanxi*" which is further categorized in terms of "B2B *guanxi*" (wherein both parties are business people), and B2G *guanxi* (wherein one party is a business person while the other is a government official) (Fan, 2002). B2G *guanxi* has been recognized as impacting tourism development where access to tourism resources and developmental decisions are strongly associated with relationships and the exchange of favors between business persons and the government (Li, Lai, & Feng, 2007). Unlike Western societies, in Confucianism, social interactions are guided by intimacy/distance, superiority/inferiority and righteousness/propriety (Hwang, 2000). Since companies regard *guanxi* as a strategy to access resources from external parties (Chen, 2017), some studies have portrayed *guanxi* as bribery or nepotism (Fan, 2002). However, the exchange of favors and intimacy in *guanxi* is not in essence ethically wrong but rooted in the Confucian way of thinking and behaving. Consequently, the cultural norm of reciprocity and the role *guanxi* plays in everyday Chinese' life makes *guanxi* influences unavoidable (Su, Mitchell, & Sirgy, 2007; Wang, 2013). From this perspective, foreign entrepreneurs have been shown to rely on B2G *guanxi* to succeed in China (Yang et al., 2014). This socially recognized rule of proper conduct based on intimacy and reciprocal obligation of exchanging favors highlights the mix between the instrumental and affective nature of *guanxi*, which often involves emotional bonding and high levels of trust (Gold, Guthrie, & Wank 2002).

As a male-dominant *guanxi*-based society, the Confucian influenced *guanxi*-based network dictates that women's roles in society should be family oriented (in Chinese: 女主内) rather than dealing with external *guanxi*-based networks for career advancement. A study on women managers in China's IT industry found that women's strategies to nurture external *guanxi* are often facilitated by their male mentors. This is related to B2B *guanxi*. Xu and Li (2014) found that although professional women acknowledge the importance of social events in establishing external-oriented *guanxi*, many hold negative views towards such activities. They further note that the derogatory use of the expression "hostess" (in Chinese: "酒家女") is still prevalent and used to denote the poor perception of hotel jobs for women which are indecent, and even implying the existence of the illegal sex industry in hotels. Consequently, hotel women managers who actively participate in social activities in nurturing *guanxi* are very likely to be associated with sex-related scandals (Wu & Lin,

2014). Such (mis)conceptualizations are likely to further reduce women's career progression chances as their accessibility to and engagement in external *guanxi* is limited socially and psychologically when compared with male managers. Yang (1994, p. 1-2) notes that "once *guanxi* is recognized between two people, each can ask a favor of the other with the expectation that the debt incurred will be repaid sometime in the future". Chinese often use "renqing" to express the intimacy or brotherhood between people bonded by *guanxi*. This reciprocal obligation and unstated norms highlight clear challenges for women to enter the male dominated businesses as "brotherhood" is often pre-established.

2.2.2 Within guanxi

Guanxi is not only related to female leaders' relation with other business leaders but also with their subordinates. Within *guanxi* focuses on supervisory-subordinate relationships and is regarded as more effective, in comparison to the external *guanxi,* due to the unclear boundary between work and life in China (Zhang et al., 2015). This is consistent with intrapreneurship research that suggest that while women intrapreneurs prioritize their firms' internal matters (e.g. because of limited external networking), male intrapreneurs prioritize external opportunities for their firms (Parker, 2011). Existing research reveals that even though more than 90% of Chinese hotel staffs are female, only 21% would want to have a female supervisor (Huang, 2013b). While the exact reasons are inconclusive, this evidence suggests that developing within *guanxi* can enhance women intrapreneurs' career progression because it allows them to build trust, exchange favors and strengthen their relationships with their subordinates. In addition, both professional women and male bosses perceive women as having more family-work conflicts, which limits their career advancement chances in the tourism sector where high flexibility is demanded (Wu & Lin, 2014). The supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* is influenced by the Confucian concept of propriety and respect for elders and those in authority, and this is the norm in China (Chen et al., 2004; Zhang et al., 2015). This in turn promotes a sense of belonging and loyalty from employees (Wang, 2013; Liu & Wang, 2016), and implies that being able to manage such *guanxi* is a key factor in becoming a successful leader (Zhang et al., 2015).

2.2.3 Back-stage guanxi

This *guanxi* is affective and underpinned by family, common kinship, education, and hometown or firm connections, which are often utilized as effective *guanxi* bases to cultivate long-term *guanxi* (Scott et al., 2014; Hwang, 1997; Fan, 2002). Back-stage *guanxi* can however be a double-edged sword for women. Family support and family *guanxi* base are essential for women because whilst being a base, women are also responsible for it so it in turn hinders work opportunities (Huang & Aaltio, 2014; Scott et al., 2014). Yu, Luo and Zhou (2012) note that most Chinese tourism managers cite family harmony as a priority and successful marriage life as influential to women obtaining leadership positions. Conversely, the woman's family-oriented identity advocates that a professional woman can be modern but must remain a Chinese woman (To, 2015). Thus, the discourse of gender equity as gifted to women and inherently embedded within the Chinese communist system has led to suggestions of the successful transformation of Chinese women but in reality, gender inequality persists in the homes (Croll, 2011). The three obediences (三从) which underpin the Confucian ethical principle of propriety, that is, for a woman is to obey her father as a daughter; her husband as a wife; and her sons in widowhood, is still prevalent. Consequently, the narrative of a "woman without talent is virtuous" still influences Chinese professional women interactions at work and in their marriage lives (To, 2015). Researching *guanxi* influences enables us to unpack how women overcome this dilemma through intrapreneurship. Be it external, within and/or backstage, *guanxi* influences most directly communicative aspects of organizational life, such as interpersonal trust, frequency of communication, favorable evaluations of each other by members who share some ties or connections, and preferential actions (e.g. offering information or resources) Farh et al., 1998; Tsui & Farh, 1997).

2.3. Study context: Guanxi in Chinese tourism research

Tourism researchers agree that traditional Chinese culture has often prioritized the interdependent nature of Chinese individuals (Hwang, 2000; Gu et al., 2013), with interpersonal relationships also playing a crucial role in tourism and hospitality decision making (Gu et al., 2013; Li et al., 2007; Pan, 2003). A good number of studies of *guanxi* in tourism have been contextualized in terms of community and rural tourism development in China (e.g. Chen, 2017; Zhang, Ding, & Bao, 2009; Li et al., 2007). These studies have

primarily been concerned with explicating *guanxi's* pragmatic and instrumental utility, serving as a bridge between stakeholders for (un)successful tourism development in China and thereby leading to the (non)exchange of favors and benefits between the different actors. Some studies (Ying & Zhou, 2007) have also utilized *guanxi* to explicate the nature of community participation in rural tourism in China. These studies discuss how local elites have utilized *guanxi* as an exclusion mechanism enabling only those with the right connections to benefit from tourism development to the detriment of most community members. Yet other studies apply western theorizations (patron-client and social capital theories) to conceptualize *guanxi* as a dynamic and mutually beneficial exchange mechanism for resource and opportunity distribution among rural tourism stakeholders (Zhang et al., 2009; Zhao, Ritchie & Echtner, 2011).

While the above mentioned *guanxi*-based studies have focused on the external *guanxi*-based networks, there has recently been a movement from external *guanxi* to researching more internally oriented (within) *guanxi*-based networks including in tourism. For example, Chen (2017, p. 385) argues that *guanxi* in tourism, is not just about the exchange of favors but it "is a distinctive way of life led by rural Chinese people and developed over time" in harmony with the rural Chinese world which enables the 'doing [of] tourism'. Consequently, one's *guanxi* becomes the society in which they live, but is not just limited to the exchange of favors. Zhou, Duverger and Yu's (2018) study also moves away from examining the role of external *guanxi* in tourism development. They explore the moderating role of supervisor-subordinate (within) *guanxi* and its effect on employee creativity, commitment and turnover intention in Chinese hotels. Their findings indicate that the nature of the *guanxi* relationship between supervisors and subordinates coupled with employees' creativity and perception of available organizational support determines the employees' affective commitment and requiting behaviors.

There is ergo a clear recognition in management research of the importance of treating *guanxi* as a dynamic construct. Chen et al., (2015) studied various *guanxi* ties (family ties, business ties, community ties and government ties) to understand how entrepreneurs in the creative industry utilize *guanxi* based-networks. To understand *guanxi* as a dynamic concept, previous studies' claims on the absence of gender differences in

utilizing *guanxi* could be challenged for their narrow focus on only one form of *guanxi* and its outcomes (Farh et al., 1998). The current study goes beyond this narrow focus to critically examine how all three forms of *guanxi* influence women intrapreneurs and the extent to which those influences are restricted or pre-determined by the *guanxi* identity of Chinese women. Such comprehensive *guanxi* analysis with external, within and back-stage *guanxi* provides a meaningful contribution to current understanding *guanxi* as a determinant of women intrapreneurship in the tourism sector in China.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Research design and sampling

Researchers studying cross-cultural interactions have often criticized 'Anglo/Western centric' epistemologies and allied methodologies in favor of methods that are context-relevant (Tucker & Zhang, 2016). Accordingly, this article employs a social constructionist paradigm that conceptualizes *guanxi* as a socio-culturally embedded concept and highlighting the interdependent nature of Chinese people (Jennings, 2005). Though the literature on *guanxi* is comprehensive, the lack of evidence suggesting a gendered approach led us to adopt a constructivist grounded theory approach. This approach emphasizes the active role of actors and their interactions in the process of knowledge construction and enables reflexivity and dialogue between the researchers and the actors involved (Matteucci & Gnoth, 2017; Charmaz, 2011).

The interview protocol consisted of two main sections. First, interviewees' demographics and professional background within the tourism sector of China. This included questions about their career progression aspirations in relation to their experiences of drawing on different forms of *guanxi* to facilitate/enable progression within their organizations. Second, drawing on the literature review, a series of interview questions were designed to uncover how women managers in the tourism sector can be considered as intrapreneurs and the influence of different forms of *guanxi* on women intrapreneurship. For example, to understand intrapreneurship we asked for instances where as managers they initiated and/or carried out a high visibility sales/procurement/partnership projects through to completion; as part of a unit-level management team they completed a new

product or service development initiative; were assigned to start-up a new enterprise for a company (e.g. new franchise agreement, new branch of hotel in same or different part of city or country) (Mainiero et al., 1994; Mattis, 2004; Smith et al., 2016).

A combination of purposive sampling and maximum variation sampling techniques was used to ensure the selection of Chinese women managers in tourism firms who had decision-making and line management responsibilities (Cave & Kilic 2010; Mattis, 2004). Given the focus on Confucian conceptualization of being Chinese, it is particularly difficult for "outsiders" to undertake primary research in this context (Sui, 2005). The recruitment and primary data collection were undertaken by two Chinese female co-authors, who relied on their existing professional networks to recruit twenty-four study participants (see also Scott et al., 2014). The maximum variation sampling techniques ensured that the sample was diverse in terms of participants' professional background, departmental knowledge, geographic location, annual income, marital status and age (Table 1).
[Insert Table 1 around here]

To ensure anonymity we coded participants as P1-P24. All 24 interviewees worked in different sub-sectors within tourism (ILO, 2013; Baum, Krajl, Robinson, & Solnet, 2016), namely tour/travel, destination marketing organizations, 4-5 star hotels, airline and theme parks. Twenty of the interviewees are managers in large firms (more than 300 employees) while four are senior managers/directors in medium-size firms (100-300 employees) as defined by the Chinese government (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Table 1 reveals their current positions and location. However, during the interviews the participants also shared their experiences from previous employment and work contexts, where necessary. The interview questions were translated from English into Chinese by the two Chinese co-authors to ensure that the questions were understandable and reflected the researchers' aims.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

Data for this study came from twenty-four in depth semi-structured interviews conducted between January and March 2018. A grounded theory approach was adopted to collect the data which aimed to highlight the intrapreneurial individual (Mattis, 2004) and the

'interdependent self' in *guanxi* (Hwang, 1997). This approach enabled the researchers to explore the topic broadly but with some structure ensuring that the interview questions were relevant to allow for individual opinions and experiences on the topic (Decrop, 1999). Interviews were conducted in Chinese, each lasting 1 hour on average. Data collection was stopped when both Chinese co-authors felt that materials were highly repetitive and had reached data saturation (Jennings, 2005). With the consent of the interviewees, the interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim in Chinese and English, and cross-checked by the co-authors prior to data analysis (Decrop, 1999; Smith et al., 2016).

Specifically, following the constructivist grounded theory methodology, all the transcribed interviews were analyzed in an "iterative, comparative, interactive, and abductive" process (Charmaz, 2011, p. 361) in three steps: open coding, axial coding and selective coding, to gain insights and construct knowledge (Matteucci & Gnoth, 2017) about *guanxi* influences on women intrapreneurship. In open coding the first author carried out line-by-line coding by reading through the transcripts multiple times and identifying the key themes. A small reflexive memo produced after each interview was reviewed to enable a better understanding of the data at this stage. Axial coding and selective coding involved organizing the themes into higher order concepts through categorizing and selecting recurring themes in the codes. The first level coding revealed recurring themes about the women's intrapreneurial actions (e.g. taking risks/initiatives, putting self forward for promotion) (Mainiero et al., 1994) and how each is influenced by specific forms of *guanxi*. Informed by our literature review, the higher-level selective coding consisted of exploring the recurrent themes in more depth to uncover illustrative evidence of women intrapreneurship initiatives that were led by the women managers that we interviewed and the associated *guanxi* influences. To ensure the quality of codes and themes (Decrop, 1999; Bernard, 2012), the data analysis was first conducted independently and then cross-checked by the Chinese and non-Chinese co-authors to reflect the data in English. This process enhanced consistency promoted the researcher's familiarity with the data and enabled the selection of direct quotations to support the empirical analysis (Ngoasong & Kimbu, 2016). The other members of the research team read through all the transcripts, adopting auditor type roles and thereby provided further confirmation with regards to the interpretation of the data.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Women intrapreneurship initiatives in the tourism sector of China

Overall, the interview data revealed five illustrative women intrapreneurship initiatives in the tourism sector that are consistent with the intrapreneurship literature from across the 24 women managers that were interviewed. Women managers can also be intrapreneurs where they put themselves forward to undertake assignments that are financially risky and results-oriented in their organization (Mainiero et al., 1994). Making use of the five initiatives, such accounts of the women intrapreneurs are analyzed below to uncover instances of financially risky business decisions that led to (or were aimed at) revenue generation (sales) for their companies and how the realization of intrapreneurship initiatives was related to the *guanxi* influences (Appendix 1). All of these are equally important in the attainment of intrapreneurial initiatives (Smith et al., 2016). The analysis of these cases further articulates the distinctive tourism-specific needs linked to women intrapreneurship and include an array of businesses within a range of sub-sectors in tourism. The three forms of *guanxi* are inter-linked, rather than linear and our analysis considers this interaction as crucial for realizing the intrapreneurship initiatives evident in the five cases.

First, consider P9, a woman manager who was appointed as Marketing Director, in charge of 30 hotels in South West China, all of which are part of a hotel chain. She was hired to develop and deliver a strategy to increase sales revenue (and contribute to profits) by allocating marketing and sales staff across the 30 hotels. When asked to describe how she was promoted to the post of Marketing Director, she provided the following account of her risk-taking and results-driven achievement as marketing manager in one of the regional branches of the hotel group that has six hotels:

> Our group has 6 hotels in Chengdu. I recognized that while the largest of our
> hotels is in a leading position, the competitive advantages had decreased over
> its 10 years of operation. Although our other hotels had different positioning,

we were using the centralized strategy from our best hotel … and so many other hotels had opened. [As Marketing Manager] I knew we needed a transformation. What I did is cancel the central sales office and created smaller sales teams, each focusing on a single hotel in Chengdu. I got one staff promoted to the central office to empower my staff and reduce the turnover rate. The successes we achieved is why I got promoted, to try to extend this marketing strategy to other regional hotel offices. (P9)

The above quotation suggest that P9 displays intrapreneurial traits as evidenced in the innovation (new marketing strategy) and taking risk with the expectation of results (Park, 2011). With respect to *guanxi* influences and as illustrated in Appendix 1, P9 spoke about how she cultivates and manages relationships (external *guanxi*), encourages "exchanges of favors" in her team (within *guanxi*) and the important exchange of support between her and her husband (back-stage *guanxi*) (e.g. Wang, 2013).

The case of P9 is like P10, the second illustrative women intrapreneurship initiative, in terms of the marketing-orientation. P10 is a Marketing Director who explained how she took the risk of giving up corporate opportunities in a big city to reside and work in new hotel in a smaller city where her husband lived. Upon arriving at the city, she was intrigued when the hotel owners told her that as a small city attracting tourists is a key challenge for the senior team. As Marketing Director, it was within her remit to address this. When asked to describe what actions she took, she explained that she "led a team that focused on the intangible heritage in the city and cooperated with other local hotels to create an intangible heritage exhibition that created a lot of marketing opportunities" (P10). Many people started to recognize our hotel brand. Even local people started to say positive things about the hotel industry because we brought in many opportunities. Even my mother-in-law was proud of me for promoting her city (P10).

It is not a touristic city. As a secondary city, our hotel needs to respond to local businesses. I said this to my boss 'we cannot rely on existing approaches'. I have led my team to negotiate and signed business contracts with 1500 government and private businesses. I tailor-made business packages for them

positioning our hotel as the number one business-oriented hotel in town. Because of this, my sales team always finish their tasks earlier because we target businesses not individual guests. I always say, my boss trust me and they see me as part of a bigger picture. Because I do all these, if I need anything, they make it smooth for me. (P10)

The experience of P10 typifies a woman intrapreneur who actively initiates and realizes new business opportunities for their employer from opportunity recognition to operationalization (Iacobucci & Rosa, 2010). Her accounts about the role of trust both in terms of owner-employee (her bosses trusting her) and manager-subordinate *guanxi* (supporting her employees to be creative) is related to perceived organizational support that are known to be important in the success of Chinese hotels (Li et al., 2018).

The third illustrative women intrapreneurship initiative is that undertaken by P22, the Revenue Director of an international hotel chain in China, a post she has held in other hotels. Her accounts suggest that though *guanxi* is very important, it does not always require the exchange of favors (e.g. Su, Mitchell & Sirgy, 2006). Rather, she believes in the capabilities and achievements of women managers, which can convince senior managers to identify, entrust them with more responsibility and promote them to more senior and challenging positions. This is related to what Mainiero et al., (1994, p.1) label "getting anointed for advancement". She identified responsibility for the pricing strategy of the international hotel chain as one of the most financially risky decisions:

As revenue director, I oversee setting the price for rooms and hotel packages for our China-based hotels. Every day is a new venture for me. For example, I can change hotel room prices many times during a day. Those prices directly relate to the profit of the hotel. Why they trusted me is because I demonstrated my ability before, my boss introduced me to work here now. Now we have become friends and partners. Setting the room price is always risky. But I learnt my lessons and my hotel knows my job is risky. They trust me as a person, and they believe my pricing approach can generate revenue. (P22)

The fourth illustrative woman intrapreneurship initiative was uncovered from the accounts of P21, an Associate Director of one of the largest theme parks in Shanghai, China. Her experience is interesting because although she did not study finance and accounting, her boss, a woman senior executive was leading the implementation of company policy that required the selection of result-oriented, risk-taking and hardworking directors. This is a major challenge for women given that traditionally, the top management positions in the theme park sector is held by men. At first sight, the main innovations that the company was undertaking were either product-related (e.g. themed land, parade routes, comics superheroes) or services (e.g. pricing and promotions). The accounts of P21 suggests that being entrepreneurial in financial decision-making can equally constitute an intrapreneurial initiative when underpinned by risk-oriented and result-oriented aspirations. Crucially, P21 associated her success to personal and trusted relations (Hwang, 2000) as well as the exchange of favors (Yang, 1994), evidenced in her interview accounts in terms of "showing a lot of respect for government officials" (*external guanxi*), "going shopping together with my boss" in addition to "being professional" (*within guanxi*).

> I do not have a finance background, but I am the associate director of finance. My boss in product development was appointed director of finance due to her finance background. I convinced her that I can lead the finance team as I wanted to challenge myself. My background in product and project-based innovation also enables me to understand better how to allocate money strategically to realize the major efficiencies that the company needed to achieve across our operations. (P21)

The fifth women intrapreneurship initiative was uncovered in the accounts of P8, who was appointed as the China Regional Director of a global hotel group, directly reporting to the group headquarter in the USA. She led a team to formulate (and is implementing) the strategy for hotel reservations, customer service, social media interaction, regional data service (reversion, loyalty, quality including managing sales relationships with online travel agencies (OTAs). Rapidly growing social media in China

has made it imperative for hotels to innovate their marketing for example through using online travel agencies which is an increasingly attractive option for customers. She explained that in addition to being "reliable and constantly showing your ability", including how "all my staffs think I am a superwoman", building "trust and good *guanxi*" can be the difference between succeeding and failing.

> We work with OTAs [online travel agencies] allocate work to them. I try to understand them and build the trust. Our objective is to expand our business [sales] and make more money. When we are creating a regional network, the Hong Kong office always thought they are superior. But I knew my boss was previously a General Manager in the Hong Kong office. My boss trusted me and gave me the relevant contact there. Very quickly I was able to sign two partner hotels in Hong Kong. Once we had built trust and good *guanxi*, whenever I asked partners to promote something, they were more cooperative resulting in more sales to both sides (P8).

Taken together, the five initiatives illustrated above can be described as examples of *guanxi* influences on women intrapreneurship initiatives because the women did not only put themselves forward to assume risk-taking and results-oriented positions within their organizations (Mainiero et al., 1994). Crucially, they also actively drew on their awareness and knowledge of *guanxi* as favor, defined as "behavior that favors people with whom one has a close relationship" (Hwang, 2000, p. 17) to seek family, organizational and societal support necessary to achieve substantive/major innovative projects within their respective tourism organizations (Smith et al., 2016). The data across the 24 women managers suggest that, although Chinese women managers can be intrapreneurs within the tourism sector in China, some women see their managerial roles as conformist and not requiring them to undertake intrapreneurial initiatives. The following section discuss the thematic essences that emerged from the data to describe the way in which *guanxi*-based networks influence this two-way perspective in which women intrapreneurship is seen as necessary for

women's advancements versus conforming to organizational routines within the tourism sector.

4.2 The influence of guanxi on women becoming intrapreneurial

Our analysis of the experiences of Chinese women managers reveals the importance of *guanxi* for influencing women intrapreneurship through facilitating career advancement (e.g. Chen et al., 2004) and enabling women managers to acquire information and resources necessarily to display what Park (2011) calls intrapreneurial traits (innovation, risk, and result and harmony orientation) within their organizations. The analysis also suggests that *guanxi* alone does not guarantee successful women intrapreneurship, especially where women managers see their managerial role as conformist. The influence of *guanxi* is presented under three sub-headings to reflect the three forms of *guanxi*: (1) Enhancing and maintaining external *guanxi*, (2) Cultivating within *guanxi* through "friendship", (3) Back-stage *guanxi*: struggles and measures.

4.2.1 External guanxi influences on women intrapreneurship:
To understand external *guanxi* influences we focus on how women utilized business-to-government (B2G) and business-to-business (B2B) to realize intrapreneurial initiatives. B2G *guanxi* was mentioned with caution, with 20 out of 24 interviewees stressing that they "do not have under-the-table connections with the government" (P1) citing the current anti-corruption campaign in China. Words such as, "respect", "attention" and "special treatment" were used to describe innovative ways of maintaining good external *guanxi* governed by the Confucian hierarchical order and the idea of righteousness (Hwang, 2000). This is typified in the following quotations:

> As we are an international brand hotel, all essential connections are made by the property owner. We do not use coupons to maintain relationships with government departments. When we have new desserts or something special, we will bring a bit for them to taste. During celebrations, I send them good will messages. You must make them believe you care and respect them (P4).

Like P4, other interviewees spoke about how the "general manager and the property owner who sometimes invited them [government officials] to our banquets and other occasions" (P7). This approach where interactions with government officials are done by the most senior management, and in private is viewed as proprietary, honoring and respecting authority (Hwang, 2000). While the use of external *guanxi* with government by female entrepreneurs (Xu & Li, 2014) and for general business success in China (Xin & Pearce, 1996) is not new, the current study analyzed the influence on women managers seeking to be intrapreneurial (Parker, 2011). The interviewees made references to "responsibility" and being "given tasks from the top" to negotiate with government officials. Their narrative confirmed that this respect for authority leads some women managers to be conformist rather than intrapreneurial (Smith et al., 2014) in medium-to-large tourism business. As *guanxi* often indicates reciprocal obligations, pre-existing "brotherhood" excluded women manager to enter the *guanxi* circle and exchange favors (Wang, 2013)

Business-to-business (B2B) *guanxi* with external industry partners was like B2G *guanxi* in terms of the high-level respect, the difference being attention to attaining the business objectives. Because of the relatively smaller circle, reciprocity is often embedded within *guanxi*-based networks (Wang, 2013) and this arguably results in healthy and harmonious competition. The experiences of the interviewees suggest that a socially recognized view of *guanxi* between managers and important clients as deeply rooted and affective in nature is crucial to be a successful manager. This is manifested in high levels of trust, bonding (Gold et al., 2002) and intimacy guiding most decisions (Chen et al., 2004). This is evidenced in the following quotations:

> When building *guanxi* with my clients, a good solution only brings you half success, it is the high level of trust that makes them believe your offer is the best possible solution… Even if I were to leave this hotel, they will follow me to another hotel because they are my *guanxi*-based network and I could argue for a better arrangement for them (P11).

The above quotations reveal how external *guanxi* becomes a valuable resource that is highly personal (Hwang, 2000) with women managers developing strong bonding with clients (P11). This partly explains why B2G *guanxi* is handled by the most senior management and owners of firms. The women managers studied suggested that difficulties in accessing and utilizing external *guanxi* can restrict opportunities to be intrapreneurial because of the risks of losing customers due to inability to establish and sustain personal relationships.

4.2.2 Within guanxi (supervisor-subordinate and peer-to-peer) influences on women intrapreneurship

The interviewees described within *guanxi* along the lines of "maintaining social harmony and creating different friendships" (P3). This is consistent with the Confucian ideal that individuals' need to justify their harmonious and friendly interactions with others based on the perceived position of people within *guanxi*-based networks governed by benevolence, righteousness and propriety (Chen et al., 2004). With regards to managing *guanxi* with their supervisors (line managers), interviewees often referred to mentorship or "friendship with distance" (P18) and the tourism sector as "very people oriented" (P13). They suggested that their career changes were strongly associated with and influenced by their supervisors, especially during the early part of their careers. Long-term bonding was also identified as important with some respondents contacting their "previous boss" for help in solving challenging tasks assigned them by their current supervisors. The quotations below evidence the nature of within *guanxi*:

> All my bosses are my mentors and important persons in my life. When you work diligently, they will help you. Except for my first position which I found by myself, all other positions have come to me (P5).

The participants identified flexibility and risk orientation as a key motivation for them to become interested in intrapreneurial initiatives, especially in the early stages of their careers. In such circumstances they were willing to take on challenging tasks from their supervisors, who act benevolently as mentors and help their subordinates overcome these

thereby enabling the development of solid bonds between them. Like previous studies, it was noted that informal social gatherings with supervisors potentially enhances this (social) bonding and trust between individuals (Liu & Wang, 2016).

However, the boundaries between informal friendship and work relations were also discussed by some interviews as blurred. Creating positive impressions therefore becomes an important strategy in maintaining good *guanxi* with supervisors, especially where the supervisor is male (e.g. Xu & Li, 2014). Intrapreneurship literature suggest the important role of organizations in nurturing such initiatives (Mattis, 2004) as well as the role of the manager as a person in grasping emerging opportunities (Halme et al., 2012). Our participants identified direct support from their immediate supervisors (beyond organizational support) through successful *guanxi* management as an important opportunity for them to progress within their organizations. They described how they managed within *guanxi* as follows:

I often act as a warm-hearted sister and I am aware of their mood. If I sense anything, I ask if everything is ok at home. If I can help, I will (P23).

I treat my boss with respect and show I am a responsible person. Even when we discuss personal matters during social events, I talk about how I handle things instead of asking questions without multiple solutions in mind (P7).

The above quotations suggest that Chinese women managers' management style is gentle and harmonious, rather than the competitive style of male managers. To be a strong and interdependent leader, Chinese women managers seem to have reconstructed women's traditional identity from obeying at home to leading at work (To, 2015). A similar finding emerged from analyzing the peer-to-peer dimension of within *guanxi*. Within the limited supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* studies, researchers often look at this form of *guanxi* as a binary concept (e.g. Zhang et al., 2015), and have therefore tended to overlook *guanxi* with peer managers. For many interviewees, peer-to-peer *guanxi* was an affective type of *guanxi* within the company. However, as captured in the following quotations, while true

friendship could develop from peer-to-peer *guanxi*, many interviewees felt that peer-to-peer *guanxi* was very challenging where it does not promote internal cooperation:

> You are also their boss, so you need to be strong and know that you have the knowledge and capacity to lead. Nobody will follow a follower… As we all are senior managers or directors, we speak the same language and face similar level of difficulties (P12).

> My team won two prizes recently. The industry expects and requires cooperation between different teams, if others do not cooperate or make it slow, it creates trouble especially as there is no direct hierarchy among managers in different departments (P20).

> Peer-to-peer *guanxi* is always tricky in all workplaces. You need to understand how they think and try to solve any conflicts. When I am not very busy, I am willing to help other departments because we all have one goal (P15).

From the above analysis, both the supervisor-subordinate and peer-to-peer dimensions of within *guanxi* must be developed and drawn upon to succeed as a woman intrapreneur. The overarching experiences of the interviewees reflect the narrative provided by P17 who observed that, "you need to have your arguments. You do not want your team to think you are a weak leader and you do not want your boss to know you have no idea. A gentle but strong feminist style". Rather than being overtly competitive and risk-oriented, many of the women managers adopted a gentle and calm style enabling them to make their positions clear while at the same time maintaining a harmonious *guanxi* within the firm. Adopting this traditional view of women in Confucianism with a modern twist was believed by the interviewees to be an effective way of creating mutual benefits for both employees and managers as has been indicated in previous studies (Zhang et al., 2015).

4.2.3 Back-stage guanxi influences on women intrapreneurship

Back-stage *guanxi* is considered as the way in which a common background creates opportunities for nurturing *guanxi* (Wang, 2013). Among all interviewees, education and family related *guanxi* where most frequently cited as more important than external and within *guanxi*. Interviewees noted that coming from the same hometown and/or school could facilitate *guanxi* management. Even though this type of *guanxi* did play a role, in our study, education seemed increasingly important for managing workplace *guanxi* when compared with previous *guanxi* studies (Fan, 2002):

> My boss and I come from the same town, so we often invite each other's
> families to visit and enjoy dinner together. So, we trust each other (P4).

> G*uanxi* with classmates is much simpler compared with work-related
> *guanxi*. If our classmates need help or require information, we always find
> a way to help (P16).

With regards to family *guanxi*, marital status clearly highlighted the impacts of family *guanxi* on external and within *guanxi*. Here, the interdependent woman's career initiatives depended on their interactions with their husband and his senior family members. Unmarried women managers who worked in a different city instead of their hometowns often argued that their parents could not provide any alternative career suggestions and this distance from home made it less likely for parents to frequently exert pressure on them to get married. This traditional view based on the importance of propriety for women, that is more family and marriage oriented, though gradually changing is still important in modern day China (To, 2015).

> It is my choice to put my job as a priority. I want to face challenges but if
> the current job is too stable and I do not face any challenges, I will start to
> search for new opportunities within my networks (P19).

Actively searching and maintaining *guanxi* provided both affective and instrumental rewards for the women managers through the support this provided in helping them secure and succeed in challenging managerial positions. This highlighted the hierarchical order of women's lower position in the family. More importantly, interviewees commonly referred to their husbands or partners as more talented and useful mentors for their careers, and they were equally as important for cultivating their *guanxi*-based networks (see also Scott et al., 2014):

> My husband works in the hospitality industry as well, and he always gives
> me valuable suggestions. He said we are a team. Without him, I will not be
> in this position (P2).

> As a woman you like a man with talent, so I always listen to his suggestions.
> Also, his dad found me this job with *guanxi*. My boss also knows this and
> sometimes ask me to send warm greetings to him (P20).

> I invite my boss's family to come my place for dinner. A single woman will
> never do it. My husband goes along with my boss very well, so do I with
> his wife (P20).

Here, external *guanxi* is maintained/cultivated through the family. The Confucian idea of family and its obligation to utilize one's own *guanxi* to help family members is considered as natural (Hwang, 1997). However, by placing the husband at the centre/head and pivot of the family, there remains much work to be done to reduce the gender inequalities existing at the family level in China (Li, 1997), and the consequent impacts this has on fostering women intrapreneurship at the workplace. In this regard, P7 noted that:

> I do not want to have a very senior position, which will have many social
> events. The more social events at work, the less harmonious life at home.
> As a normal woman at home, a suitable position to balance work and life is
> desirable. I wake up 5am to buy food in the market and after dinner I will

clean the house and wash dishes. No matter how senior my position is at

work, I am a wife and mother at home (P7).

The risk-averse attitude described by P7 above suggests that the socially-constructed identity of a woman within family *guanxi* demotivates them from engaging in intrapreneurial practices at the workplace as they prioritize family related matters over work (Yu et al., 2012). Individuals are often defined co-relationally. Being a wife, a mother and a daughter in law has been prioritized (Wang 2013). The affective social obligations made them resistant to fully utilizing or creating *guanxi*-based networks for advancing their careers.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article complements tourism research debating gender (and the role of women) in tourism (Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2016; Duffy et al., 2015) by introducing women intrapreneurship (Mainiero et al., 1994; Mattis, 2004) and theorizing its key determinants in a non-western context. In particular, the article draws on Confucian conceptualization of *guanxi* (e.g. Chen et al., 2004; Hwang, 2000) to analyze how women managers utilize different forms of *guanxi*-based social networks to construct identities within those networks and thereby enhance their career progression chances as women intrapreneurs in China. Through providing a holistic view of doing *guanxi* and its influences on individual women managers, we show that *guanxi* is not simply a problematic and unethical phenomenon as is sometimes misconstrued (e.g. Geddie et al., 2005). It can also be a socio-culturally constructed concept to facilitate long-term trustable, flexible, risk-oriented, harmonious and resulted-oriented women intrapreneurship. Figure 1 presents the emergent theoretical framework. [Insert Figure 1 around here]

Figure 1: Understanding *guanxi* influences on women intrapreneurship

FORMS OF *GUANXI*

Back-stage *guanxi*
- Family
- Kin/Friendship
- Education

External *guanxi*
- Business to government
- Business to business
- Business to customer

Within *guanxi*
- Supervisor
- Subordinate
- Peer

***GUANXI* INFLUENCES**

Family-Work and male-dominant expectations

Personal competence and motivation to succeed

Organizational culture (work context)

WOMEN INTRAPRENEURSHIP
- Display of entrepreneurial initiative at work (risk-oriented, result-driven, and maintaining harmony) leading to career advancement
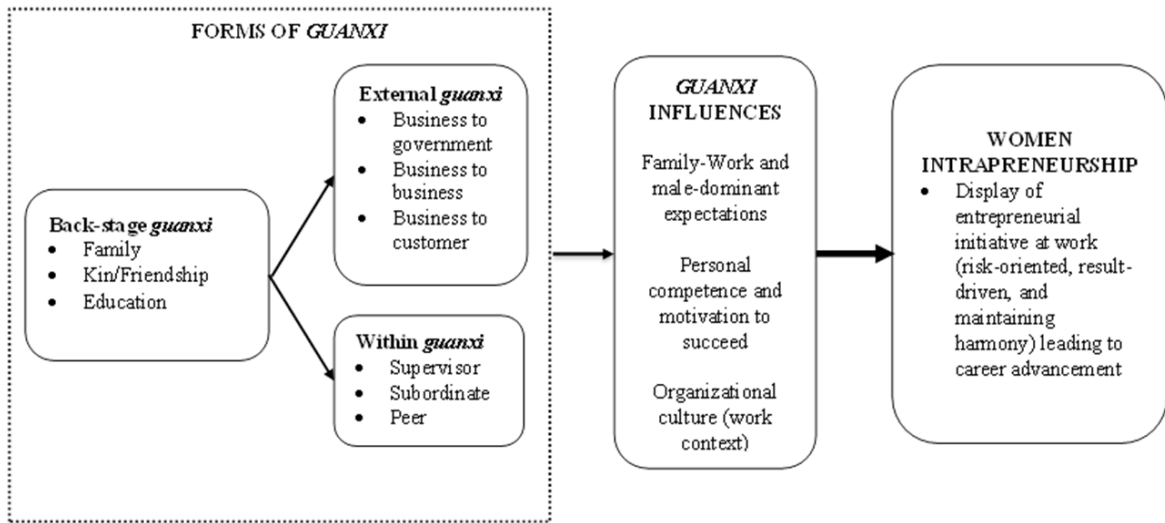
Figure 1 emphasizes the importance of cultural concepts such as *guanxi* in understanding personal relationships in interdependent contexts when supporting women managers' career development. Both organizational and personal networking are important, and the framework aligns these to *guanxi* influences, seen as critical for understanding and encouraging women intrapreneurship. The qualitative evidence from women managers has enabled us to uncover the extent to which *guanxi* influences on individual versus organizational factors are important in the likelihood of ambitious women being appointed to lead intrapreneurial initiatives.

Building on the Confucian conceptualization of Chinese as "interdependent individuals" (Hwang, 2000), a second contribution of this article is that it extends existing gender identity research through a discussion of the socially embedded idea of personhood and humanity. As seen in Figure 1, a gendered perspective of *guanxi* shows how women shift their identities and roles from independent decision-makers as managers/supervisors to interdependent intrapreneurs at work and at home through constantly negotiating their *guanxi*-based networks. Our findings offer fresh insights and a contemporary understanding of the Confucian-influenced Chinese conceptualization of *guanxi* (e.g. Chen, 2017; Yang et al., 2014). Rather than conceptualizing *guanxi* as a particularistic relationship (e.g. Wang, 2013; Wong & Tam, 2000), our results reveal *guanxi* to be a natural desire for women managers to acquire long-term trustable relationships aimed at achieving harmonious results at the workplace and at home.

Third, the majority of *guanxi* studies have traditionally focused on a specific form of *guanxi* and their influence on interactions (e.g. Yang et al., 2014; Xin & Pearce, 1996), thus limiting their managerial implications for tourism firms. Our analysis of how back-stage *guanxi* (especially family *guanxi*) influences work-place based *guanxi* (external and within *guanxi*) reveals that single and divorced women managers are more flexible and risk-oriented as they often do not need to deal with parents-in-law. Although the gradual increase in the presence of talented women at managerial level in the tourism sector reveals continuous efforts in reducing the gender pay gap, addressing (in)equity at societal level (Croll, 2011; UNWTO, 2019) and creating an independent women leader image at work, the narrative of women as 'managers of the home' still dominates and clearly demonstrates the challenges that women managers still face in China (Fincher, 2014). Tourism businesses should offer women managers different types of flexible working plans that will attract them to engage in risk-oriented and result-oriented initiatives within the organization (Mattis, 2004).

This study provides a foundation for future tourism research on women intrapreneurship. Our qualitative research design is limited in that our choice of women managers is based on purposive sampling, which might have led to expectancy results for some of the interviews. Future qualitative research can either repeat our study with a nonprobability sample or use a probability sample to increase the credibility of our conclusions beyond the women managers studied (Bernard, 2012). Quantitative research can also address this limitation by evaluating the management support for intrapreneurship, organizational structure, resources availability and reward of specific business organizations as suitable for the implementation of intrapreneurial initiatives within the context of *guanxi* influences, for example, using the Likert-scale questionnaires (Harris and Ogbonna, 2006; Kuratko et al., 1990). In addition, our findings about women intrapreneurship initiatives is based on the perspective of one-woman manager per organization and does not provide the detailed analysis of the initiatives and the rewards for the respective tourism firms, for example to the extent described in Smith et al., (2016).

Future research should also pay attention to the fact that *guanxi* can be unique in terms of being specific to China. Future studies can adapt Figure 1 by replacing *guanxi* with *blat* in Russia (Michailova & Worm, 2003) and *ubuntu* in southern African

destinations (Naude, 2017). *Guanxi, blat* and *Ubuntu* are about networking and relationship management and have consistently challenged dominant western ideologies of business relationships by western tourism firms operating in non-western destinations. Qualitative and quantitative studies can also compare the extent to which the determinants of women intrapreneurship produce similar outcomes for women managers in different industries and destinations.

REFERENCES

acas.org.uk (2017). Gender pay gap reporting.
    http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=5768 (Accessed: 26.06.2018).

Baum, T. (2013). *International perspectives on women and work in hotels, catering and tourism*. Geneva: International Labor Organization.

Baum, T., Krajl, A., Robinson, R. N. S. & Solnet, D. J. (2016), Tourism workforce research: A review, taxonomy and agenda, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *60*, 1-22

Bernard, H. R. (2012) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, (Chapter 7).

Charmaz, K. (2011). Grounded theory methods in social justice research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The 4th Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 359–380). Los Angeles: Sage.

Cave, P., & Kilic, S. (2010). The role of women in tourism employment with special reference to Antalya, Turkey. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, *19*, 280-292.

Chan, S. H., & Ng, T. S. (2016). Ethical negotiation values of Chinese negotiators. *Journal of Business Research*, *69*(2), 823-830.

Chen, X. (2017). A phenomenological explication of guanxi in rural tourism management: A case study of a village in China. *Tourism Management*, *63*, 383-394.

Chen, C. C., Chen, Y., & Xin, K. (2004). Guanxi practices and trust in management: A procedural justice perspective. *Organization Science*, *15*(2), 200-209.

Chen, M. H., Chang, Y. Y., & Lee, C. Y. (2015). Creative entrepreneurs' guanxi networks and success: Information and resource. *Journal of Business Research*, *68*(4), 900-905.

Chenglong, J. (2018). *Report: Gender pay gap narrows in China*. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201803/07/WS5a9f6971a3106e7dcc140271.html (Accessed: 17.12.2018).

Chinanews.com (2018). Harmony ideology and Chinese sprits. http://www.chinanews.com/sh/2018/07-02/8553087.shtml (in Chinese) (Accessed 06.07.2018).

Costa, C., Bakas, F. E., Breda, Z., Durão, M., Carvalho, I., & Caçador, S. (2017). Gender, flexibility and the 'ideal tourism worker'. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *64*, 64-75.

Croll, E. (2011). *Feminism and socialism in China*. New York: Routledge.

Decrop, A. (1999). Triangulation in qualitative tourism research. *Tourism Management*, *20*(1), 157-161.

Duffy, L. N., Kline, C. S., Mowatt, R. A., & Chancellor, H. C. (2015). Women in tourism: Shifting gender ideology in the DR. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *52*, 72-86.

Fan, Y. (2002). Guanxi's consequences: Personal gains at social cost. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *38*(4), 371-380.

Farh, J. L., Tsui, A. S., Xin, K., & Cheng, B. S. (1998). The influence of relational demography and guanxi: The Chinese case. *Organization Science*, *9*(4), 471-488.

Fincher, H. L. (2014). *Leftover women: The resurgence of gender inequality in China*. London: Zed Books.

Gold, T., Guthrie, D., & Wank, D. (2002). An introduction to the study of guanxi. In T. Gold et al. (eds) *Social connections in China: Institutions, culture, and the changing nature of guanxi*, pp.3-20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gu, H., Ryan, C., Bin, L., & Wei, G. (2013). Political connections, guanxi and adoption of CSR policies in the Chinese hotel industry: Is there a link? *Tourism Management*, *34*, 231-235.

Geddie, M. W., DeFranco, A. L., & Geddie, M. F. (2002). From guanxi to customer relationship marketing: How the constructs of guanxi can strengthen CRM in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *13*(3), 19-33.

Halme, M., Lindeman, S., & Linna, P. (2012). Innovation for inclusive business: Intrapreneurial bricolage in multinational corporations. *Journal of Management Studies, 49*, 743-784.

Hwang, K. K. (1997). Guanxi and mientze: Conflict resolution in Chinese society. *Intercultural Communication Studies, 7*(1), 17-38.

Hwang, K. K. (2000). Chinese relationalism: Theoretical construction and methodological considerations. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, *30,* 155-178

Hoobler, J. M., Wayne, S. J., & Lemmon, G. (2009). Bosses' perception of perception on family-work conflict and women's promotability: Glass ceiling effects. *Academy of Management Journal*, *52*(2), 939-957.

Huang, J. (2013a). Female managers in IT: Gendered research in guanxi-based network. *Journal of South China Normal University*, *2*(2), 50-56 (in Chinese)

Huang, P. (2013b). Female hospitality leader will become a trend. http://info.meadin.com/Industry/90398_1.shtml (in Chinese) (Accessed 12.06.2018).

Huang, J. & Aaltio, I. (2014). Guanxi and social capital: Networking among women managers in China and Finland. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *39*, 22-39.

ILO (2013). *Toolkit for poverty reduction trough tourism*. 2nd Edition. Geneva: International Labor Office.

ILO (2016). *Women at work: Trends 2016*. Geneva: International Labor Office.

Jennings, G. R. (2005). Interviewing: A focus on qualitative techniques. In B. W. Ritchie, P. Burns, & C. Palmer (Eds.), *Tourism research methods: Integrating theory with practice* (pp. 99-117). UK: CABI.

Kimbu, A. N. & Ngoasong, M. Z. (2016). Women as vectors of social entrepreneurship. *Annals of Tourism Research, 60*, 63-79.

Lee, J. (2017). *Chinese women business leaders: Seven principles of leadership*. Cambridge MA: Elsevier.

Li. Y. (1997). *Awakening of female right*. Beijing: China Social Science Press (in Chinese)

Li, X. (2009). *Chinese tourism development*. Beijing: Tourism and Education Publication (in Chinese).

Li, Y., Lai, K., & Feng, X. (2007). The problem of 'guanxi' for actualizing community tourism: A case study of relationship networking in China. *Tourism Geographies*, *9*(2), 115-138.

Li, Z., Duverger, P., & Yu, L. (2018). Employee creativity trumps supervisor-subordinate guanxi: Predicting requiting behaviors in China's hotel industry. *Tourism Management*, *69*, 23-37.

Liu, H., & Wang, X. (2016) Supervisory-subordinator guanxi: concepts, measurements and variables. *Psychological Research, 9*(5) 69-75 (*in Chinese*).

Mainiero, L., Williamson, A. & Robinson, G. (1994). Getting anointed for advancement: The case of executive women; Executive commentary. *Academy of Management Executive*, *8*(2), 53-64.

Matteucci, X. & Gnoth, J. (2017). Elaborating on grounded theory in tourism research. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *65*, 49–59.

Mattis, M. C. (2004). Women entrepreneurs: Out from under the glass ceiling. *Women in Management Review*, *19*(3), 154-163.

Michailova, S. & Worm, V. (2003). Personal networking in Russia and China: Blat and guanxi. *European Management Journal*, *21*, 509-519.

Ming, L. & Yifan, W. (2018). China's gender pay gap widens in 2018: Report. China Daily. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201903/07/WS5c80dc02a3106c65c34ed5dd.html

Naude, P. (2017). Decolonizing knowledge: Can Ubuntu ethics save us from coloniality? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1-15, doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/s1055. (Accessed 10.05.2018).

Ngoasong, M. Z., & Kimbu, A. N. (2016). Informal microfinance institutions and development-led tourism entrepreneurship. *Tourism Management, 52*, 430-439.

National Bureau of Statistics (2018). Small, medium and large companies in China. http://www.stats.gov.cn/statsinfo/auto2073/201310/t20131031_450691.htm (Accessed 06.07.2018).

Parker, S. C. (2011). Intrapreneurship or entrepreneurship. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *26*(1), 19-34.

Pan, G. W. (2003). A theoretical framework of business network relationships associated with the Chinese outbound tourism market to Australia. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 14(2), 87-104.

Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, L., Rees, P., & Murray, N. (2016). Turning entrepreneurs into intrapreneurs: Thomas Cook, a case-study. *Tourism Management*, *56*, 191-204.

Scott, J. M. T., Harrison, R. T., Hussain, J., & Millman, C. (2014). The role of guanxi networks in the performance of women-led firms in China. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship, 6*(1), 68-82.

Su, C., Mitchell, R., & Sirgy, M. J. (2007). Enabling guanxi management in China: A hierarchical stakeholder model of effective guanxi. *Journal of Business Ethics, 71*(3), 301-319.

To, S. (2015). *China's leftover women: late marriage among professional women and its consequences*. New York: Routledge.

Tucker, H., & Zhang, J. (2016). On Western-centrism and "Chineseness" in tourism studies. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *61*, 250-252.

WEF (2018). The Global Gender Gap Report 2017. World Economic Forum. http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/rankings/

UNWTO (2019). *Global Report on Women in Tourism – Second Edition, Key Findings*, UNWTO, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420407

Wang, C. (2013). Governing the Taiwanese countryside: Guanxi, power and agency. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, *40*(5), 799-815

Wong, Y. H., & Tam, J. L. M. (2000). Mapping relationships in China: Guanxi dynamic approach. *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, *15*(1), 57-70.

Wu, Y., & Lin, Q. (2014). Social supports and women's career in hospitality. *Contemporary Corporate Education*, *5*, 83-84(in Chinese).

WEF (2017). *What the pay gap between men and women really looks like.* https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/11/pay-equality-men-women-gender-gap-report-2017/ (Accessed 11.06.2018).

Xin, K., & Pearce, J. L. (1996). 'Guanxi: Connections as substitutes for formal institutional support'. *Academy of Management Journal*, *39*(6), 1641-1658.

Xi, J. (2013). *The Chinese Dream*. http://news.cntv.cn/special/xijinpingjianghua/ (Accessed 10.04.2018).

Xu, K., & Li, Y. (2014). Exploring guanxi from a gender perspective: urban Chinese women's practices of guanxi. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 1-18

Yang, J., Ryan, C., & Zhang, L. (2014). External entrepreneurs/investors and guanxi: Hostels in a tourism area, Xinjiang, China. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *26*(6), 833-854.

Yang, Y., & Peng, M. (2016). Earnings differentiation in the Chinese hotel industry: Gender, human capital and job position effects. *Human Resources Development, 2*, 35-42 (in Chinese).

Yin, M., & Zhang, J (2015). *Social responsibility analysis of Chinese tourism firms*. Beijing: Tourism and Education Publication (in Chinese).

Ying, T., & Zhou, Y. (2007). Community, governments and external capitals in China's rural cultural tourism: A comparative study of two adjacent villages. *Tourism Management*, *28*(1), 96-107.

Yu, Y., Luo, J., & Zhou, Y (2012). Work-life balance among female staff of high start hotels. *Collection of Women's Studies*, *6*, 31-36.

Yiu, E. (2017). Why more Chinese women are taking over the family firm or starting their own business. *South China Morning Post.* 6 November 2017.

Zhang, X., Ding, P., & Bao, J. (2009). Patron-client ties in tourism: The case study of Xidi, China. *Tourism Geographies*, *11*(3), 390-407.

Zhang, X., Li, N & Harris (2015). Putting non-work ties to work: The case of guanxi in supervisor–subordinate relationships. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *26*, 37-54.

Zhao, W., Ritchie, J. R. B., & Echtner, C. M. (2011). Social capital and tourism entrepreneurship. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *38*(4), 1570-1593.