# WORKING WOMEN IN THE EVENTS AND ENTERTAINMENT SECTOR: Tensions and Hybridisations from a Qualitative Perspective with a Focus on Gender, Sustainability, and Governance

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#### **KEYWORDS**

Women in the Events and Entertainment Sector Gender Equality Sustainability and Governance Qualitative Methodology Inequalities and Barriers Communication Strategies Spain

#### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the position of women in the events and entertainment sector in Spain, with a focus on the integration of gender equality, sustainability, and governance. It investigates the principal inequalities and perceived barriers, analyses the communication strategies employed to assess alignment with gender equality, and evaluates the implementation of sustainability and governance measures. A qualitative methodology is adopted, combining digital ethnography, semi-structured interviews, and the analysis of relevant empirical studies. The findings reveal tensions and hybridisations in the application of regulatory frameworks, as well as challenges for management systems in advancing inclusive and sustainable practices

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#### 1. Introduction

his research examines the position of women in the events and entertainment sector in Spain, with particular attention to the integration of gender equality, sustainability, and governance. Central to this analysis is the exploration of dialogical aspects, specifically the perceptions and representations held by the women themselves, as well as the role of corporate culture in shaping communication and dialogue with stakeholders. These factors are crucial for understanding the interactions and negotiations that occur within virtual settings and contribute to the construction of identities and representations among individuals and groups (Ruiz and Aguirre, 2015).

Strategic communication is fundamental for institutions seeking to convey their image, mission, and values effectively, thereby promoting transparency and enhancing reputation. As Herranz de la Casa and Cabezuelo Lorenzo (2009) note, communication management for transparency represents both a core organisational characteristic and a commitment to the institution's values and mission.

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria provide a framework for assessing a company's performance across three critical domains: environmental impact, social responsibility, and governance. These standards evaluate the broader consequences of business operations beyond financial profit and are increasingly essential for investors seeking responsible and sustainable companies. Following the enactment of the Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence (CSDDD) on 24 July 2024 (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024), companies are undertaking a two-year process to transpose the directive into national law, thereby contributing to sustainable development and the transition to sustainable economies and societies. In accordance with this directive, companies must identify, prioritise, prevent, mitigate, eliminate, minimise, and remedy any actual or potential adverse impacts on human rights and the environment associated with their operations, including those of subsidiaries and service providers, while ensuring access to justice and remedies for affected parties in cases of non-compliance.

Gender equality constitutes a fundamental component in the evaluation of sustainability and corporate governance according to ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) criteria. Within the social dimension, the promotion of gender equality is reflected in practices such as equal pay, diverse work teams, and the implementation of inclusive policies. These measures not only foster a fairer working environment but also contribute to the sustainable development of organisations, indicating that gender equality is both a matter of social justice and a key determinant of business performance and sustainability. Consequently, alignment with gender equality is essential for a comprehensive assessment of sustainability and corporate governance under ESG criteria (Mascareñas, 2024).

In Spain, ESG criteria have gained increasing prominence due to national and international regulations and the growing interest of investment firms in supporting sustainable enterprises. These criteria assess risks across three principal domains: environmental, social, and governance. Environmental assessment includes the use of renewable energy and sustainable resource management; social assessment encompasses the adoption of inclusive policies and the protection of labour rights; and governance evaluation considers corporate ethics and transparency in decision-making as strategic priorities.

In response to ongoing social challenges, the experiential marketing agency 4foreverything, in collaboration with the association MUM (Mujeres Unidas Contra el Maltrato or Women United Against Abuse), has developed an intervention guide aimed at reducing sexual assaults against women at events. This initiative follows reports indicating that such crimes accounted for 19% of offences against sexual freedom in Spain in 2023, occurring in venues and open spaces during May and October (Instituto de las Mujeres, 2021).

A significant and long-standing concern in the sector was the absence of a collective agreement that reflected the distinctive nature of the events and entertainment industry. The First State Collective Agreement for Event Organising Companies (Ministry of Labour, 2024) came into force on 1 January 2025 and will remain valid until 31 December 2027, establishing a regulatory framework for working conditions in the event organisation sector. However, a collective agreement has yet to be developed for other service providers who face similar challenges and needs.

This agreement applies to all employees with employment contracts in the sector, excluding senior management and those under special labour relations. It incorporates verification indicators for gender equality and non-discrimination. While it does not establish a dedicated environmental verification

system, it aligns with social responsibility practices by promoting work-life balance and employee well-being. In terms of governance and transparency, the agreement requires companies to implement time-control systems accessible to labour inspectors, standardise labour relations across the sector, and ensure compliance with labour regulations. It also regulates the distribution of working hours, providing mechanisms for verification and compensation.

Raising awareness and providing training for personnel involved in the organisation and management of events is essential to introduce prevention protocols and establish guidelines for responding to incidents. Aligning ESG principles with the organisation of large events not only fulfils regulatory requirements but also enhances the economic, social, and reputational outcomes for organisers, while reinforcing their commitment to sustainable and responsible development.

## 2. Key Concepts

This section examines the principal concepts underpinning the theoretical framework of the article, providing an understanding of the context of women in the events and entertainment sector in relation to gender equality, sustainability verification, and governance. It focuses on the key concepts, relevant regulations, and principal indicators employed in the implementation of management systems that adopt a gender equality perspective, ensuring equal treatment and opportunities while promoting sustainability and sound governance.

## 2.1. Context of Gender Equality in Spain

According to Rigat-Pflaum (2008), the concept of gender mainstreaming has been central to the framework of gender equality policies. This approach began to be implemented following the Women's Conference in Beijing (1995) and subsequently became official policy within the European Union.

Gender mainstreaming can be understood from two perspectives: as a strategy that engages all social actors in the pursuit of gender equality as a core and structuring aspect of social relations, or as a methodology for developing specific tools for gender analysis. The theoretical foundation of this approach emphasises the transformation of the differentiated impacts of the gender system on men and women, focusing on individuals as whole beings.

The principle of equality grants identical rights to all human beings regardless of race, sex, religion, social status, ideology, or personal circumstances (Organic Law 3/2007). In Spain, corporate equality policies are primarily implemented through equality plans, which serve as strategic and integrative tools to promote gender equality across all areas of organisational management, thereby advancing effective equality between women and men (Instituto de las Mujeres, 2021). These instruments guide the design, implementation, and evaluation of equality plans in accordance with applicable regulations.

The main regulatory framework in this area includes:

- Organic Law No. 3 (2007) of 22 March on effective equality between women and men;
- Royal Legislative Decree No. 2 (2015) of 23 October, approving the revised text of the Workers' Statute Law;
- Royal Decree-Law No. 6 (2019) of 1 March on urgent measures to guarantee equal treatment and opportunities between women and men in employment and occupation; and
- Royal Decree No. 901 (2020) of 13 October, regulating equality plans and their registration, and amending Royal Decree No. 713 (2010) on the registration and deposit of collective labour agreements; and Royal Decree No. 902 (2020) of 13 October, on equal pay between women and men (Ministry of Equality, 2021).

This legal framework has been fundamental to the development of equality processes and contexts in Spain. Nevertheless, despite two decades of progress, numerous challenges remain to be addressed

#### 2.2. Need for Sustainability and Governance Indicators in the Sector

The growing demand for transparency and social and environmental responsibility has prompted the establishment of regulatory frameworks at both European and national levels, requiring certain companies to incorporate sustainability information in their management reports.

In Spain, ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) criteria have gained increasing prominence due to national and international regulations, as well as the rising interest of investment firms in

supporting sustainable businesses. As illustrated in Figure 1, ESG standards assess a company's performance across three key areas: environmental, social, and governance.

The environmental criterion evaluates a company's impact on the environment and its management of risks related to climate change, energy efficiency, waste management, biodiversity, and carbon emissions. The social criterion examines the effects of corporate activity on individuals, including employees, customers, local communities, and society at large. This encompasses gender equality, labour rights, working conditions, community impact, and the protection of human rights. It also includes risk management and safety indicators, covering compliance with safety protocols during the planning and execution of events, thereby safeguarding the well-being of both attendees and staff, and mitigating reputational risks such as crises or social media incidents. In short, it considers the implementation of inclusive policies, equal pay, workforce diversity, and measures supporting employee well-being.

Finally, the governance criterion focuses on how organisations are directed and managed, emphasising transparency, corporate ethics, and responsible decision-making. This involves monitoring anti-corruption practices, the composition and diversity of boards of directors, and the adoption of audit and control policies to ensure clear governance structures, mechanisms for stakeholder participation, and transparency in organisational decision-making.

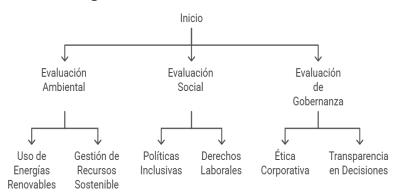


Figure 1. ESG criteria and their evaluation

Source: Author's elaboration (2025).

Large Spanish companies are required to comply with Law 11/2018 concerning the presentation of sustainability reports, commonly referred to as Non-Financial Information Statements (EINF). These reports correspond to the aforementioned ESG criteria and fulfil disclosure requirements that enhance both competitiveness and reputation in the eyes of collaborating investment firms, enabling companies to respond to the growing consumer demand for evidence of ethical and sustainable practices. In essence, these reports allow organisations to demonstrate a responsible and ethical commitment to environmental, social, and governance standards.

According to the SME Figures report (2023) produced by the Directorate-General for Industry and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Spain's business landscape is predominantly composed of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which account for 99.8% of companies, with large enterprises (≥250 employees) representing only 0.2%. The report further highlights that microenterprises, defined as organisations with fewer than 10 employees, comprise 94.4% of the market and are not currently obligated to comply directly with these ESG reporting requirements.

Given the influence that companies exert on both institutional culture and their interactions with the surrounding environment, equality criteria must be incorporated into procurement and supplier selection processes to foster awareness throughout the organisation. The Guide for the Development of Equality Plans in Companies provides specific recommendations for embedding gender equality into corporate management, including the involvement of senior management and the active promotion of equality values across all areas of the organisation. The guide's objectives are summarised as follows (Instituto de las Mujeres, 2021):

• Facilitate a structured methodology: provide clear tools and steps for companies to develop, implement, and evaluate equality plans effectively;

- Ensure compliance with legal regulations: align equality plans with relevant legislation, such as Organic Law 3/2007 and Royal Decree 901/2020;
- Promote effective equality: identify, correct, and prevent gender inequality and discrimination within companies;
- Foster sustainability in labour relations: implement measures that guarantee equal opportunities for women and men across all levels of management; and
- Generate a positive organisational impact: raise awareness among employees and management of the strategic importance of gender equality.

In addition, this guide integrates sustainability and governance as fundamental components within equality plans. Consequently, the information provided is reinforced by international frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda, particularly SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), offering practical tools for companies seeking to implement inclusive and sustainable strategies.

Another key aspect in corporate management is the adoption of inclusive business practices. The guide advocates the systematic analysis and collection of information regarding a company's interactions with suppliers and other external actors to ensure responsible and equitable practices throughout the supply chain. Equally, monitoring and evaluation are essential, necessitating the establishment of specific indicators to assess the effectiveness of the equality plan, with governance criteria including employee participation and the production of periodic reports that enable adjustment and improvement of implemented strategies.

The B Corp™ certification, awarded by the non-profit organisation B Lab, serves as an international standard recognising companies that meet high benchmarks in social and environmental performance, transparency, and corporate responsibility, thereby generating a positive impact on society and the environment. Certified companies are required to demonstrate commitments to responsible governance, social impact, and ethical economic practices. The certification process, which covers governance, workers, community, customers, and environmental performance, is renewable every three years. In Spain, interest in the B Corp™ certification has grown considerably, although there is no specific national regulation. Nonetheless, Law 11/2018 on non-financial information and diversity obliges large companies to report on sustainability and corporate social responsibility, aligning with the principles upheld by B Corp™ companies. While certification remains voluntary and is awarded by a private organisation, many companies pursue it to signal their commitment to ethical and sustainable standards beyond legal requirements, seeking the international recognition it confers.

The implementation of verification measures in sporting events has developed over the years through a variety of regulations, certifications, and dedicated programmes, although not all events have adopted such practices. Notable examples include certain editions of the Olympic Games and other major competitions. At the 2012 London Olympic Games, an integrated sustainable management system was introduced, incorporating standards such as ISO 20121 and the GRI Events framework. Verification covered areas including carbon measurement, waste management, and biodiversity, achieving a 50% reduction in  $\rm CO_2$  emissions and a 62% recycling rate (London Sustainability Report, 2012). Similarly, at the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, the FIFA Green Goal System, based on ISO 14001 and GRI G4, was applied, resulting in a 30% reduction in emissions and 45% recycling, with oversight provided by Ernst & Young (FIFA, 2014). More recently, the Paris Olympic Games demonstrated a strong commitment to carbon neutrality and sustainability certification, including ISO 20121, with strategies particularly focused on emission reductions and biodiversity preservation.

# 3. Methodology and Objectives

#### 3.1. Main Objectives

The overall aim of this study is to examine the situation of women in the events and entertainment sector in Spain, with particular reference to the incorporation of gender equality, sustainability, and governance perspectives.

The specific objectives are as follows:

• To investigate the principal inequalities and barriers related to gender equality, sustainability, and governance, as perceived by women who are key actors within the sector.

• To analyse the communication strategies employed by institutions that organise and promote large-scale events, with the aim of assessing the alignment of their practices with gender equality and the verification of sustainability and governance criteria.

## 3.2. Methodological Framework, Paradigm, and Design

The study adopted a qualitative methodological framework grounded in the constructivist paradigm. Following Guba and Lincoln (1994, 2005), reality is understood, from an ontological perspective, as socially constructed, emerging from diverse forms of perception and manifesting as locally and contextually specific realities. Epistemologically, there is no strict dualism; rather, the researcher and the object of study are interdependent. Methodologically, a hermeneutic and dialectical approach is applied. Traditional positivist criteria such as internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity are replaced by the parallel criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

The study is based on a flexible, qualitative research design maintained in continuous dialogue with the object of study. Accordingly, the design is adapted throughout the research process to facilitate a deeper understanding of the object or subject in all its complexity. This iterative inquiry allows for the incorporation of transformations and novel insights that emerge from the experiential context, contributing to the uniqueness of the findings (Mendizabal, 2012; Picasso and Gracia, 2021).

#### 3.3. Techniques for Gathering Information and Selecting Informants

In this study, multiple information-gathering techniques were triangulated, including digital ethnography (Bárcenas Barajasy Preza Carreño, 2019), semi-structured interviews (Vela, 2001) administered via self-completed questionnaires to women in the sector, and an analysis of secondary information drawn from empirical studies conducted by the author team within the framework of the Scientific Observatory of Events and other sources. These sources documented the principal barriers and inequalities observed in the sector.

For the selection of informants, an intentional, opinion-based sampling method was employed (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2003), identifying individuals whose knowledge of the issue made them particularly suitable for inclusion according to strategic criteria. The sample comprised women working in the sector, considering the diversity of employment situations and career trajectories, including permanent, seasonal, and self-employed roles, as well as representation across the public, private, and mixed sectors, and across different positions such as directors, managers, technicians, and assistants.

A total of twenty interviews were conducted using an online self-administered form. A semistructured interview guide was developed to address the dimensions of interest. The principal dimensions and sub-dimensions explored in the interviews were:

- Overall representation of gender equality, sustainability, and governance
- Regulatory framework, including knowledge, relevance, and adequacy
- Perceived inequalities and barriers within the events and entertainment sector in Spain, encompassing working environment, entry-level access, positions, roles and responsibilities, remuneration, work-life balance, training opportunities, and sexual and gender-based harassment, as well as communication practices
- Challenges and proposals

In addition, the secondary information collected was systematically organised, allowing the study to address the situation of women in the sector by integrating relevant documents and various works authored by the research team and other scholars.

For the ethnographic component, websites of different companies were examined, focusing on information relevant to key fields of observation across the main organisations in various areas of the sector, including award event organisers, sporting events, business events, festivals, music events, and training initiatives. Additional initiatives identified during the fieldwork were incorporated through targeted searches based on the information provided on the observed websites, employing a snowball sampling technique.

Digital ethnography, an interdisciplinary approach, enables the analysis of social practices and the production of meaning through technology (Bárcenas and Preza, 2019). As Ruiz and Aguirre (2015) highlight, these digital spaces are crucial for observing the communication, interaction, and negotiation dynamics under study.

The specific dimensions observed were:

- The use of inclusive language and avoidance of gender-stereotypical imagery
- Disclosure of business practices, sustainability initiatives, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) actions
- Presence of inclusion and diversity indicators
- Availability of equality plans and protocols for the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based harassment
- Existence of corporate governance and participation indicators
- Information regarding the company's sustainability policies, including the use of recyclable materials, waste minimisation, energy efficiency, and other sustainable practices
- Consideration of the local economic impact, assessing how the company's events or activities contribute to community development, employment, trade, and cultural promotion
- Implementation of CSR initiatives, such as support for social causes, community projects, or collaborations with non-profit organisations
- Risk management and safety measures, including verification reports demonstrating compliance with safety protocols, the implementation and supervision of safety measures during events, and the company's capacity to manage physical security risks as well as reputational risks (e.g., crisis management, social media oversight, and incident response)
- Evaluation of participant and stakeholder satisfaction, through surveys or analyses of attendee feedback concerning organisation, accessibility, content, and services, as well as input from staff and supplier companies regarding management practices, inclusion, and sustainability measures

### 3.4. Criteria of Rigour, Ethics, and Reflexivity

The study adopted established criteria of rigour (Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza, 2018) to validate the research process. Particular attention was given to triangulating observations and interpretative perspectives from the research team, alongside the use of multiple data collection and analysis techniques within the qualitative framework.

This approach was especially relevant from the perspective of epistemological vigilance and rupture (Bourdieu et al., 1975), enabling a collective comparison of discourses, insights, and practices, and facilitating a holistic and contextually grounded understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Reflexivity was central to the research process. The research team actively considered the construction of the object of study in dialogue with the experiential context, re-evaluating assumptions and methodological choices throughout the study. Exploratory interviews were conducted to capture the perspectives of key informants, incorporating emerging concepts, and ensuring that the analysis reflected participants' lived experiences. In parallel, a review of relevant literature was undertaken to situate the findings within the broader theoretical framework, avoiding an over-reliance on pre-existing assumptions.

#### 3.5. Methodological Limitations

To conclude this section, from a methodological perspective, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the lack of external validity restricts the generalisation of results to other contexts or populations, given the absence of statistically representative samples. Consequently, the findings are contextual and specific, reflecting the experiences of the women and companies in the sector who participated in the research, thereby supporting construct validity (Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza, 2018). Secondly, the non-exhaustiveness of the results indicates that while the most recurrent and emerging perceptions are identified and described, there remains the possibility that additional categories or insights may exist that were not fully captured in this study.

#### 4. Analysis of Results

This section presents an analysis of the data collected through the various information-gathering techniques employed in the study.

#### 4.1. Analysis of secondary information

The Report on the Situation and Problems of Entertainment Technicians, Sánchez González and Alonso (2020), prepared by the Scientific Observatory of Iconic Events14, provides a detailed analysis of working conditions in the sector, with a special emphasis on gender equality, sustainability and governance. A summary is presented in relation to the following analysis objectives:

# 4.1.1. Inclusion of the Perspective of Gender Equality, Sustainability, and Governance in the Events and Entertainment Sector in Spain.

The report highlights that women constitute only 15% of professionals in the technical entertainment sector, compared with 83% men, revealing a pronounced gender gap. This segregation affects both the allocation of roles and opportunities for promotion and professional recognition:

From a sustainability and governance perspective, key observations include:

- The absence of specific regulatory standards for the sector, contributing to job insecurity
- A lack of established best practices regarding hiring procedures and the protection of labour rights
- The need to develop a National Collective Agreement that incorporates clauses addressing gender equality and sustainability in the organisation of events

The subsequent report prepared by the Scientific Observatory of Events following the declaration of a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 health crisis (2021) once again highlights the challenges faced by professionals and companies in the cultural, events, and entertainment industry. The structural characteristics of the sector render it particularly vulnerable to economic, health, and legislative crises. These characteristics include the intermittent and temporary nature of employment. Most workers in the sector do not hold permanent positions, alternating between periods of high and low employment depending on demand for events. This job instability, coupled with the absence of a specific legal framework, creates precarious working conditions and heightens the economic vulnerability of employees, a recurring concern in the context of social sustainability.

Furthermore, the sector is characterised by a fragmented business structure that relies heavily on subcontracting, with a predominance of micro-enterprises and self-employed workers, alongside larger development companies or public administrations. Subcontracting and outsourcing create fragile value chains in which the disruption of a single link can affect multiple stakeholders.

The diversity of employment types, including employees, self-employed workers, freelancers, cooperative members, and small business owners without staff, compounds the challenge. The lack of a uniform regulatory framework specifically governing the industry generates legal uncertainty and unequal access to labour rights. In the absence of a national collective agreement, job insecurity and instability are exacerbated.

The report further emphasises the need for improved governance, noting deficiencies in sector-specific regulations, transparency in the allocation of government aid and benefits to industry professionals, and the absence of effective public and private partnership mechanisms. This lack of regulatory clarity and administrative coordination hinders both access to labour rights and the provision of government support.

The Safe Events Guide (2020) is a comprehensive document that sets out guidelines for organising events and performances during the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing key aspects to ensure health safety, maintain continuity in the sector, and mitigate risks. It responds to the challenges posed by the health crisis with practical solutions, enabling events to continue safely and promoting the adoption of good practices across the industry.

At the same time, the guide identifies structural problems and specific challenges, such as regulatory differences between autonomous communities, highlighting the need for a unified legal framework to reduce legal uncertainty in the sector. This legislative fragmentation hinders the planning and authorisation of events, creating comparative disparities between regions at the national level. The economic vulnerability of the sector is also noted, with the mass cancellation of events threatening the financial sustainability of companies, including artists, technicians, logistics personnel, marketers, promoters, and other professionals.

The guide further emphasises the importance of ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities and promoting environmentally sustainable events that reduce material use, waste, and transport

impact. Additionally, it recognises the role of social responsibility in planning safe and sustainable events. Collectively, these challenges affect employability, working conditions, and health and safety, ultimately impacting the quality of life of workers and the social sustainability of the sector.

## 4.1.2. Inequalities and Barriers from the Perspective of Women in the Sector

The study by Sánchez González and Alonso (2020) indicates that 61% of respondents perceive gender discrimination in the allocation of jobs. Furthermore, 80% of the women interviewed report having experienced inequality in remuneration and career opportunities.

The main barriers identified are evidenced empirically as follows. First, the wage gap and lack of recognition are significant, with 80% of technicians believing that their compensation does not reflect their knowledge and responsibilities. Second, difficulties in balancing family and work life are prevalent, as 95% of technicians consider that improved production planning would allow for better work-life balance. Third, the lack of female leadership is notable, as women in technical and production roles rarely occupy positions of responsibility, limiting the emergence of female role models within the sector.

The report by the Scientific Observatory of Post-Pandemic Events (2021) further emphasises the continuing challenges in balancing work and family life, owing to the absence of regulation regarding working hours and breaks. These issues are particularly pertinent given the irregular nature of working hours, the prevalence of evening and weekend activities, and the frequent need for travel.

# 4.1.3. Communication Strategies of Event Organising Institutions in Relation to Gender Equality, Sustainability and Governance

According to Sánchez González and Alonso (2020), the report highlights that structured communication protocols specifically addressing gender equality, sustainability and governance at events are largely absent. Notable shortcomings include a lack of planning and transparency in the hiring of technical staff, which contributes to uncertainty and job insecurity, the absence of awareness campaigns on gender equality within the sector, and insufficient governance mechanisms to ensure compliance with safety, sustainability and equity regulations.

The report recommends the development of a Good Practice Manual, endorsed by event organisers, to serve as a reference for the regulation and monitoring of standards related to sustainability, governance and gender equality. Measures to promote gender equality, guarantee decent working conditions, and enhance the sustainability of events are identified as key priorities for the sector's development. It also suggests advancing the negotiation of a collective agreement, promoting female leadership in technical areas, and establishing indicators to assess organisational compliance with best practices.

Risk management and safety indicators are included in the specific ESG criteria for social assessment. Verification reports address compliance with safety protocols and the implementation and supervision of measures during event planning and execution, ensuring the well-being of attendees and staff. Following the Health and Safety Guide (World Health Organisation, 1999), there are five steps for risk assessment in event organisation. These begin with an initial assessment of potential hazards associated with planned activities. The second step identifies those at risk in the event of an emergency. The third step establishes the necessary precautions to minimise danger, with information presented visually within the venue and in an accessible manner. Workers must also be informed of operational procedures to be followed during evacuation or other emergency situations.

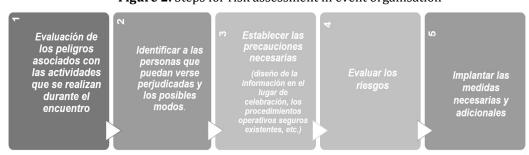


Figure 2. Steps for risk assessment in event organisation

Source: Author's elaboration based on the World Health Organisation (1999)

Within the risk assessment, a key indicator involves evaluating the company's capacity to identify and manage risks, both in terms of physical safety and those related to the company's reputation, including crisis management and information handling in the event of an incident, accident, or tragedy. Consequently, the design of the venue and its operational plans is of particular importance, as these provide essential information on access routes, interior and exterior pathways, the dimensions of entrances and exits, and the calculation of maximum capacity in relation to the flow of people through confined spaces. Furniture arrangements must also facilitate safe evacuation, while staff must be prepared to manage information effectively to support decision-making in emergency situations.

It is crucial to review and organise all available information within the facilities, with particular attention to the details communicated to attendees and the means of dissemination. Consistency in this information is essential to avoid confusion or misunderstanding, as organisers and security personnel bear responsibility for crowd safety. Given their leadership roles and training, these individuals are expected to implement best practices in security management, self-protection and risk prevention, while ensuring compliance with civil liability insurance requirements and relevant local regulations (Armstrong et al., 1996).

Another significant factor is the profile of the audience, since the nature of certain events attracts particular types of participants. Understanding the target audience enables organisers to anticipate specific needs and to assess behaviours that could increase the likelihood of incidents. A thorough risk assessment thus allows for the identification and quantification of potential threats.

Royal Decree 393/2007 of 23 March 2007, which approves the *Basic Self-Protection Standard* for centres, establishments and facilities engaged in activities that may generate emergencies, mandates the development of self-protection and emergency plans. Risk assessment involves determining the probability and potential impact of emergency situations, taking into account relevant elements such as steep slopes, dead ends, inaccessible doors, the convergence of multiple pathways into a single route, and uneven or slippery surfaces, all of which heighten the risk of injury.

The *Safe Events Guide* (2020) summarises several key aspects, including good practices and essential protocols that must be implemented to ensure the safety, sustainability, and overall success of an event:

- Planning and risk assessment. Every event must begin with a risk assessment that considers the
  characteristics of the venue, the number of attendees, and potential hazards. Maximum capacity
  must be defined, sectorisation measures established, and coordination with the relevant
  authorities ensured to guarantee safe operations.
- Safety and risk prevention. It is essential to have a self-protection and emergency plan in place, detailing evacuation procedures and responses to incidents. Safety must be supervised by trained personnel, and access control systems should be implemented to prevent overcrowding or hazardous situations. Safety protocols should cover public and worker protection (including occupational risk prevention and the provision of protective equipment), and measures must be established to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual violence in leisure contexts.
- Hygiene and public health. Strict cleaning and disinfection protocols must be applied to surfaces, furniture, and technical equipment. Waste management requires the installation of collection points for disposable materials with appropriate safety measures, while ventilation and air quality should be maximised, reflecting practices adopted following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Audience organisation and mobility. To avoid congestion, entry and exit should be staggered, and clear signage must be provided throughout the venue. Information should be accessible and visible through signage, public address systems, or mobile applications, ensuring that attendees follow designated routes. Accessibility must be guaranteed for people with disabilities through adapted pathways and specialised assistance.
- Sustainability and social responsibility. Events should align with principles of sustainability, minimising environmental impact through efficient management of water, energy, and waste. Circular economy strategies, recycling, sustainable transport, and the reduction of single-use plastics are all recommended practices.
- Technology and innovation. The digitalisation of processes is key to improving both security and the attendee experience. Contactless payments, digital tickets, and capacity control using QR codes or counting sensors should be implemented. Hybrid events, combining in-person and online participation, also contribute to reducing the environmental footprint.

- Security protocols against violence and intentional threats. Events must include specific protocols to prevent gender-based violence and harassment, with designated contact points and reporting mechanisms. Measures should also be taken to address intentional active threats, reinforcing security at entrances and around the venue perimeter.
- Coordination with essential services and public or private institutions. The presence of medical and emergency services is crucial, as is the installation of defibrillators and the availability of trained personnel capable of responding to critical situations. Coordination with local authorities and security forces enhances response capacity and ensures the safe management and delivery of events.
- Post-event evaluation and follow-up. After each event, a debriefing session should be held to evaluate its execution, identify opportunities for improvement, and analyse any incidents for future editions. Follow-up with suppliers and staff is also recommended to assess compliance with established protocols and adjust future planning accordingly.

Government institutions must communicate the importance of complying with security measures and convey public safety priorities to host companies and event promoters. The incidence of sexual harassment and abuse offences has increased markedly since 2013, with a significant rise from 2015 onwards, although there was a slight decline in 2020, followed by a rebound in the subsequent year.

Specifically, sexual assault offences against persons over the age of sixteen exhibit a more linear trend over the eight-year period, showing a modest annual decrease until 2017, followed by a subsequent increase that returned figures to their initial levels by 2020. Offences such as indecent exposure and sexual provocation have also increased at a similar rate.

Given the frequency of abuse and assault occurring during leisure events, many autonomous communities have implemented protocols for the prevention of and response to sexual violence at festivals and other gatherings. Various promoters and event organisers, including the Film Academy for the Goya Awards, local councils, and associations, have developed awareness campaigns to promote safety and preventive measures. In response, the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality established the Qualitative Observatory on the Relationship between Drug Use and Sexual Abuse in Nightlife Venues, recognising substance use as an additional risk factor in the planning and management of events.

In collaboration with the Health and Consumption Foundation (FSYC), a report published in 2016 examined the connection between sexual abuse in leisure contexts and drug use. The report identified that most consumption and associated risk of abuse or assault occurred during informal gatherings at festivities and nocturnal events (FSYC, 2016, p. 24).

Law enforcement agencies, in coordination with local councils, have emphasised the need for safety campaigns during high-attendance events, including festivities, concerts, fairs, exhibitions, the Three Kings parade, and the Sanfermines. This is justified by the potential occurrence of crimes within marquees, toilets, or market stalls, and by the necessity of ensuring medical and police assistance when required. Key preventive measures include controlling capacity and access to avoid overcrowding, supervising minors, and preventing theft and robbery in areas with large concentrations of people.

Similarly, measures such as banning access with dangerous objects must be implemented. Another fundamental aspect is the communication of information, which must be clear, accessible, and provided in multiple languages, including signage to facilitate evacuation procedures. In the case of fireworks and bonfires, close coordination with security and firefighting services is essential. Protocols addressing sexual assault are also included, with an emphasis on respecting the rights of individuals who do not participate in celebrations, ensuring their right to rest from noise.

To conclude this section, it is important to note that no specific statistics are currently available from Spain's National Statistics Institute (INE) regarding horizontal gender segregation within the entertainment and events sector. For instance, Palacio and Simón (2006) analysed gender pay disparities and observed that 'the segregation of women in relatively low-paid establishments and occupations is one of the fundamental reasons for this' (p. 493). Although their study does not focus exclusively on the entertainment and events sector, it provides a broader overview of gender segregation in the Spanish labour market.

#### 4.2. Content Analysis of Interviews

The interviews were analysed using content analysis, identifying live codes and emerging categories.

Regarding the overall representation of gender equality, an emerging category is the apparent incorporation of an underlying discourse of gender equality that lacks transformative content. One interviewee stated: 'In most spaces, equality is not integrated across the board, especially in terms of programming and decision-making. Equality plans remain more at the organisational level.'

The discourse emerging from the interviews is relatively uniform concerning perceptions of gender equality, including their hybridisations and tensions. No policies promoting parity in the sector were detected, and it is perceived as highly masculinised and entrenched. Gender inequalities are clearly visible, with the most frequently mentioned issues relating to glass ceilings and the lack of work-life balance.

Horizontal segregation is also reported: corporate event production is predominantly female, while concerts are mostly male. Only two interviewees identified opportunities for women in the sector, but these were described as fragmented.

Regarding sustainability and governance, an emerging category is insufficient sustainability and governance. Sustainability practices are considered inadequate, with two interviewees noting that they are primarily implemented as a marketing strategy. Governance, meanwhile, shows minimal progress and is dependent on the networks and relationships established with diverse stakeholders.

With respect to knowledge and application of the regulatory framework, almost all interviewees demonstrated greater familiarity with regulations and initiatives related to gender equality, but limited knowledge of frameworks addressing sustainability and governance. Regulatory measures were perceived as neither adequate nor sufficient, and the issue of care responsibilities, still concentrated on women, was consistently highlighted.

Inequalities and barriers perceived in the events and entertainment sector are pronounced for women. Clear gender disparities exist in terms of glass ceilings and the wage gap, as well as unequal treatment based on sex. One interviewee reported: 'Women are paid 100 euros and men 150 euros.' Another noted: 'Today, unequal or disrespectful treatment of women at an awards gala by the director occurred. This resulted in the person being dismissed following complaints.'

Inequalities were also evident in sexist attitudes, with respondents citing: 'Prejudice, overprotection, paternalism, mistrust...' and 'A situation of greater fragility and contempt for being a woman.'

Concerning sustainability and governance, the lack of alignment with ESG principles emerged as a significant barrier.

Regarding the working environment, it was generally described as positive in terms of teamwork, although moments of stress were reported. Company culture varied, with some described as masculine and competitive. One participant noted: 'Respectful, until the moment of stress arrives, which, unfortunately, always happens. At that point, masculine behaviour becomes more pronounced.'

Discrimination based on sex, age, and race was perceived in relation to entry level into the organisation, roles, functions, and skills. However, discrimination in hiring was not clearly perceived. Flexibility was reported, but true work-life balance remained elusive.

This analysis shows that the perceptions of the women interviewed in the events and entertainment sector in Spain reveal significant gender inequalities, with structural barriers such as the glass ceiling, the pay gap, and the lack of work-life balance policies and shared responsibility for care. Sustainability and governance remain insufficient, often reduced to marketing strategies without substantive application. Although the working environment is generally perceived as positive in terms of teamwork, it remains highly competitive and continues to reproduce male-dominated patterns.

Regarding challenges and proposals in the area of equality, an intersectional approach to work design and performance is suggested, taking into account multiple forms of inequality. In relation to sustainability and governance, the emerging categories include transparency, common and clearly communicated objectives, and the establishment of alliances between individuals, departments, and companies.

#### 4.3. Digital Ethnography Analysis

The analysis focuses on identifying emerging categories based on indicators of gender equality, sustainability, and governance on sixteen websites of different types of event organisers and service providers. The observable aspects have been subdivided into ten categories to identify similarities and differences, with a final field for additional or complementary observations: inclusive language and gender-stereotypical images; information on business practices, sustainability and corporate responsibility actions; inclusion and diversity indicators; equality plan and protocol for the prevention of and action against sexual harassment and gender-based harassment; corporate governance and participation indicators; sustainability policies implemented by the company; local economic impact; corporate social responsibility actions; risk management and safety indicators; and indicators for evaluating the satisfaction of participants and stakeholders.

In relation to gender equality in event companies, the emerging category corresponds to a discourse of equality without transformative application. The use of inclusive language shows that some companies mainly use neutral language, avoiding explicit references to gender, but without adopting advanced inclusive strategies, such as the use of '@' or 'x'. Some companies use terms such as 'specialised technicians' and 'working people', while others only use professional language without explicit bias.

In terms of visual representation, most websites do not perpetuate gender stereotypes, but neither do they explicitly reflect gender diversity in their promotional images. Companies such as the Film Academy show diversity in their events, while others limit themselves to using artistic images without a focus on inclusion.

With regard to the equality and diversity policies indicator, no explicit references to gender equality plans or sexual harassment prevention protocols were found in any of the companies analysed. Nor is there any evidence of active strategies to ensure equality in management positions or event planning. Finally, although companies may project a discourse of equity, there are no concrete measures to transform the reality of the sector in terms of gender equality.

The sustainability indicator in event organisation shows an emerging category of sustainability as a marketing strategy. Some companies do implement sustainable practices, reporting a commitment to sustainability in their discourse and highlighting certifications such as ISO 20121 or B  $Corp^{TM}$ . However, in most cases, the information is limited and lacks concrete data on recycling policies, energy efficiency, or waste minimisation.

In relation to the development of environmental policies, some companies mention a commitment to sustainability, but without detailing specific initiatives or measurable strategies to assess environmental impact. In general, no structured plans for waste management, carbon footprint reduction, or energy efficiency at events are identified. Sustainability is mentioned on several websites, but its actual application appears superficial and more marketing-oriented than reflective of verifiable practices.

Regarding the indicator of governance and transparency in event management, the emerging category is insufficient corporate governance, as most companies do not provide information on their governance structure or on the participation of stakeholders in decision-making. Although some companies report on the composition of their board of directors, they do not detail mechanisms for participation or transparency.

In relation to safety, there is a lack of indicators on regulatory compliance, as no verification reports or audits on safety protocols at events are available online. Similarly, little information is provided on risk assessment in terms of physical security, crisis management, or strategies to mitigate negative impacts on the company's image. There is therefore a significant gap in transparency and governance, with no clear accountability policies or participatory mechanisms.

The economic impact and corporate social responsibility indicator show an emerging category of undocumented economic contribution. No information is provided on how companies contribute to local economic development, whether through employment, support for local suppliers, or cultural promotion. Some companies highlight social actions carried out, but without verifiable metrics. No active CSR programmes were identified in the companies analysed, nor is there evidence of collaboration with non-governmental organisations, social inclusion programmes, or investment in community projects. For all these reasons, local economic impact and CSR are largely absent in the corporate communications of these companies.

In relation to the indicator on risk assessment and management, the emerging category corresponds to the lack of measurement of public experience and safety. This is evidenced by the absence of structured mechanisms for collecting data on the satisfaction of event attendees. Companies do not provide satisfaction surveys or analyses of accessibility and user experience. Regarding security and risk management, no documents were found detailing security protocols at events or reports on security measures and crisis management at festivals and shows. Consequently, it appears that there are no clear strategies in place to evaluate attendees' experiences or to ensure their safety at large-scale events.

#### 5. Conclusions

It is important to highlight the tensions and hybridisations emerging from this qualitative research, as well as the challenges for future studies and the contributions to interdisciplinarity. The main results indicate that the projection of a corporate image aligned with the values of gender equality, sustainability and governance often occurs in a hybrid form, reflected in fragmented strategies that lack depth and real application. Although there is an inclusive discourse on gender equality, it contrasts with the absence of concrete strategies to promote parity. Similarly, references to sustainability and governance are present at the digital level, yet they remain insufficient, isolated and fail to translate into specific, verifiable initiatives. Overall, these findings underscore the need for more comprehensive and integrated approaches in the events and entertainment sector to ensure that gender equality, sustainability and governance are not merely rhetorical commitments but are implemented meaningfully in practice.

In this regard, there is a lack of transparency in internal management and decision-making, and neither the local economic impact nor corporate social responsibility is adequately documented. Moreover, there are no solid community support programmes. With regard to safety management and satisfaction assessment, there are no mechanisms for measuring attendees' well-being or clear security protocols.

To achieve management systems with a gender equality perspective that ensure equal treatment and opportunities while guaranteeing sustainability and governance, it is essential to promote a comprehensive approach that permeates institutional culture through reflective consideration of processes, protocols, and resources, as well as through an emphasis on the differentiated impacts on women and men from an educational and emancipatory perspective. In this sense, for events to align their digital identity with their business practices effectively, they must adopt ESG criteria in a more structured manner, implementing measurable impact mechanisms, verifiable safety and equality protocols, and genuinely sustainable and transparent governance strategies.

It was therefore imperative to identify the barriers and inequalities perceived in the sector in order to problematise a policy that would enable equalisation by integrating the gaps reflected in the regulations themselves. These aspects should lead to a legal reform embodied in practices that guarantee equal treatment, sustainability and governance. Likewise, there are instances of a discourse that appears to incorporate gender equality in an underlying way, yet ultimately empties it of transformative content. This becomes an obstacle to the very practices it seeks to promote (Álvarez, 1995; Cobo, 2005; Picasso, 2016). Sustainability and governance are also treated as ancillary elements that are often reduced to marketing strategies.

Given this scenario, it is essential to promote monitoring strategies and techniques aimed at ensuring epistemological vigilance, making processes of transparency in practice visible, and guaranteeing equal treatment, sustainability, and governance.

Finally, this study provides a foundation for future research into the design of identity and representation in the digital space, addressing the gaps between corporate discourse and practice in the events industry.

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