

ROLE OF WOMEN IN TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Abstract:

The contribution of women in the business world has increased in recent years, although women are underrepresented in management and leadership. A number of studies have considered the role of women in the workplace but there is less work on the position of women in tourism employment. In the tourism industry, the percentage of women who work in the industry is high, but their function is dominated by unskilled, low-paid jobs. The aim of the article is to examine the extent to which gender segregates men and women both horizontally, in terms of types of work, and vertically, by promotion prospects. Overall, women are paid less than men and fill positions which are seen as a lower level of task. In developing countries the position of women in management is of a lower status still than in the developed countries. This article will demonstrate that such differences cannot be attributed to differences in levels of educational attainment or work experience alone.

Introduction:

Tourism presents a wide range of income generation opportunities for women in both formal and informal employment. Tourism jobs are often flexible and can be carried out at various different locations such as the workplace, community, and household. Additionally, tourism creates a wide range of opportunities for women through the complex value chains it creates in the destination economy. There are also known to be challenges facing women in tourism. Women are often concentrated in low status, low paid and precarious jobs in the tourism industry. Gender stereotyping and discrimination mean that women mainly tend to perform jobs such as cooking, cleaning and hospitality. Much tourism employment is seasonal and fluctuates according to the volatile nature of the industry. In some destinations links have been found between tourism and the sex industry which could make women more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. If a strong gender perspective is integrated into planning and implementation processes, tourism can be harnessed as a vehicle for promoting gender

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equality and women's empowerment at the household, community, national and global level. At the same time, greater gender equality will contribute to the overall quality of the tourist experience, with a considerable impact on profitability and quality across all aspects of the industry.

Key Findings

Tourism is worth investing in; it has the potential to be a vehicle for the empowerment of women in developing regions. Tourism provides better opportunities for women's participation in the workforce, women's entrepreneurship, and women's leadership than other sectors of the economy. Women in tourism are still underpaid, under-utilized, under-educated, and underrepresented; but tourism offers pathways to success.

1. Women make up a large proportion of the formal tourism workforce.
2. Women are well represented in service and clerical level jobs but poorly represented at professional levels.
3. Women in tourism are typically earning 10% to 15% less than their male counterparts.
4. The tourism sector has almost twice as many women employers as other sectors.
5. One in five tourism ministers worldwide are women.
6. Women make up a much higher proportion of own-account workers in tourism than in other sectors.
7. A large amount of unpaid work is being carried out by women in family tourism businesses. Notwithstanding these results, there is still much to explore and analyze. For example, how do women's pay levels differ between tourism jobs; how do women's hours in tourism compare with men's; and how to define and measure women's unpaid work in family tourism businesses?

Employment:

In general, women are well represented informal tourism employment. However, women are more likely than men to be working at a clerical level, are less likely than men to reach professional-level tourism employment, and as a result, their average take-home pay is lower than men's.

Hotel/restaurant employees who are women by region (%)	
Region	Regional average
Latin America	58.5

Caribbean	55.4
Africa	47.0
Oceania	46.8
Asia	35.4
Average	48.62

Women hotel/restaurant employees by occupational status, by region (%)			
Region	Professional	Clerks Service	workers
Asia	38.9	49.4	35.6
LatinAmerica	36.6	62.7	65.5
Africa	34.9	56.6	34.8
Caribbean	N/A	67.3	42.9
Oceania	N/A	N/A	N/A
Average*	36.8	59.0	44.7*

Entrepreneurship

Tourism offers significant opportunities for women to run their own businesses. Women are almost twice more likely to be employers in the tourism industry than in other sectors.

Women employers in the hotel and restaurant sector, by region (%)*		
Region	In general	In hotel & restaurant sector
LatinAmerica	23.2	51.3
Caribbean	26.4	32.8
Africa	20.8	30.5
Asia	17.4	29.7
Oceania	N/A	N/A
Average	21.95	36.08

Education:

The level of education of women working in the tourism industry, international data on education suggests that the proportion of women graduates in all fields is increasing. There is still a shortage of women teaching at tertiary level, however, and there are proportionally fewer women service graduates than in other fields.

Participation in higher education varies by region. Within regions some countries have particularly high levels of women services graduates, such as Philippines (82.1%), Cayman

Islands (80%), and Honduras (78%). In contrast in Qatar only 9% of services graduates were women.

Women graduates in services, by region (%)*		
Region services	All tertiary graduates	All graduates
Latin America	59.6	53.5
Caribbean	66.2	50.3
Asia	52.2	46.3
Africa	36.8	30.8
Oceania	N/A	N/A
Average	53.7	45.3

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics Database.

Leadership:

Tourism offers women opportunities for global leadership. Women hold more ministerial positions in tourism than in any other field. Nevertheless, only one in five tourism board (NTAs) CEOs are women, and only one in four tourism industry associations have a woman chair. 21% percent of countries had a women tourism minister compared to 17% of ministerial positions in general. The highest proportion of women tourism ministers is in Africa, where one third of all tourism ministers are women. In African countries, the post of tourism minister is almost twice more likely to be held by a woman than other ministerial posts.

Community:

The formal and informal opportunities tourism provides women can have a significant impact on poverty reduction in rural communities. The proportion of women “own-account workers” is much higher in tourism than in other sectors across all regions. Women are contributing a substantial amount of unpaid labour to home-based tourism businesses as “contributing family workers”. Unpaid family workers are vulnerable to exploitation.

Women as “own account workers” in the hotel and restaurant sector, by region (%)

Latin America 39%. Africa 38 %. Caribbean 29 %. Asia 27%. Average 33%. It also appears that women are contributing a large amount of unpaid work to family tourism enterprises. As Table 6 shows, the proportion of contributing family workers that are women is considerably higher in tourism than in other industries, with the exception of Asia. In the Caribbean, for example, 84% of contributing family work is provided by women, compared to 51% in other sectors. These figures are troubling for a gender analysis of the tourism industry. While

women's work in family tourism enterprises clearly contributes to community development, if this work is unpaid it is subsidizing a large proportion of community-based tourism but makes little contribution to women's empowerment.

Main Recommendations by Theme:

Employment

Increase awareness of the important economic role that women play in the tourism industry. Strengthen legal protection for women in tourism employment; such protections include minimum wage regulations and equal pay laws. Improve maternity leave requirements, flexible hours, work-from-home options, and arrangements for childcare.

Entrepreneurship

Facilitate women's tourism entrepreneurship by ensuring women's access to credit, land and property as well as providing appropriate training and resources to support women's enterprises.

Education

Promote women's participation in tourism education and training and improve the educational level of women already working in different areas of the industry through a targeted and strategic program of action.

Leadership

Support women's tourism leadership at all levels: public sector, private sector, and community management by establishing leadership programs at the national level and in large and small-scale tourism enterprises.

Community

Ensure that women's contribution to community development is properly recognized and rewarded by taking into account women's unpaid work and by monitoring tourism activities carried out in the household and in the community.

Private sector

Promote gender equality and women's empowerment as fundamental components of Corporate Social Responsibility activities, in line with the Global Compact-UN Women's.

Women's Empowerment Principles.

Public sector including tourism policy-makers

Take proactive steps to mainstream gender in tourism policy, planning, and operations.

International organizations and civil society

Call on governments, the international community, civil society organizations and the private sector to protect women's rights in tourism and to monitor progress in the empowerment of women through tourism. Collaborate with UNWTO-UN Women to develop programs and projects dedicated to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment through tourism.

In order to assess how effective policy actions are in improving the situation of women in tourism, it is important to re-evaluate these indicators at least every three years. This year's baseline will provide a yardstick against which to evaluate future results.

Factors Influencing Success and Lessons Learned

- Local women entrepreneurs like Mama Anna took the initiative and drove this Cultural Tourism Program towards success.
- Women were supported and encouraged to participate in the project from its inception.
- Training in business skills, pricing, linking to markets and record keeping was provided to all the project participants, ensuring they were equipped with the information necessary to benefit from tourism.
- Family support for and between women greatly bolsters their confidence, determination, and ability to succeed
- Women's potential to succeed in tourism often goes unrealized, not due to the lack of potential, but rather due to the lack of opportunities
- Questioning restrictive traditional gender roles by male community members can support women's freedom to pursue entrepreneurial initiatives in the tourism sector.
- Entrepreneurship empowered these women economically, boosted their self-esteem and helped them earn the respect and admiration of their spouses.

Obstacles to women joining the tourism workforce

- Cultural norms and values

- Inadequate infrastructure
- Financial burden on employers
- Working culture (alien working culture, harassment, working hours, & combining work & family life)
- Skills shortage and lack of social skills
- Tourism sectors negative image

The UNWTO/UN Women collaboration follows an Action Plan with a number of specific activities:

1. Set up a multi-stakeholder taskforce
2. Initiate a triennial joint report on the participation and status of women in tourism industry
3. Establish a portal to serve as a global network for knowledge sharing
4. Build international awareness about opportunities for women in tourism
5. Call upon UNWTO members to take vigorous steps to support gender mainstreaming in national development processes, so as to achieve women's equality in the tourism sector

Key findings include:

1. Women make up a large proportion of the formal tourism workforce
2. Women are well represented in service and clerical level jobs but poorly represented at professional levels
3. Women in tourism are typically earning 10% to 15% less than their male counterparts
4. The tourism sector has almost twice as many women employees as other sectors
5. One in five tourism ministers worldwide are women
6. Women make up a much higher proportion of own-account workers in tourism than in other sectors
7. A large amount of unpaid work is being carried out by women in family tourism businesses. In terms of **Employment**, the report finds that women are well represented but tend to be working at a service or clerical rather than professional or decision-making level.

In Entrepreneurship, it found that women are almost twice more likely to be employers in the tourism industry than in other sectors, and often employ more women than men. The results for **Education** are less promising – there are proportionally fewer women graduates in services than in other fields. Tourism offers the potential for women's **Leadership**. However, women still only represent one fifth of all tourism ministers and tourism board chairs. While tourism often contributes to **Community** development and provides opportunities for women's self-employment, the report finds that women are contributing a large amount of unpaid work in tourism family businesses, especially when compared to other sectors.

Conclusion:

Tourism has demonstrated its potential for creating jobs and encouraging income-generating activities to benefit local communities in destination areas. The tourism sector definitely provides various entry points for women's employment and opportunities for creating self-employment in small and medium sized income generating activities, thus creating paths towards the elimination of poverty of women and local communities in developing countries. However, there are a number of conditions under which this potential can be used more effectively. This requires collaboration of all stakeholders - governments and intergovernmental bodies, local government, industry, trade unions, local communities and their different member groups, NGOs, community based tourism initiatives, etc.

Increasing the use of tourism's potential whilst safeguarding the natural environment and cultural heritage and increasing social and economic justice should be the goal of further tourism development.

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