

“Tourism” a Spectrum of Opportunities for Women’s Empowerment: Special Reference to Galle City in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Tourism as an important instrument for sustainable human development including poverty alleviation, employment generation, environment regeneration and advancement of women and other less privileged groups in Sri Lanka. This paper aims to examine the importance of women in the tourism sector, analyze and evaluate the reasons for and constraints to women’s vertical mobility, and addresses the issue of how tourism affects their activities. In addition, this paper discusses the new opportunities for income generation that the tourist market might provide for women. A descriptive and analytical research design was used to describe the attitude and behaviour of the women worker in the field of tourism. Therefore secondary data was used. The quantitative research method was used to identify the actual engagement type of work, cause, selection criteria in tourism. The tourism industry was the population of this study. For this study, 50 respondents had been selected as the sample units from the tourism industry (hotels and lodges, restaurant and travel and trekking agencies) in Galle city. Therefore, primary sources were used as a questionnaire. The primary and secondary data were categorized, tabulated, processed, analyzed and computed by descriptive analysis. It was revealed that many women had the capacity to handle businesses on indigenous products such as handicrafts, garments, ornaments, floriculture etc, which were the strong side of income generation activity associated with tourism. Hence there is a huge possibility of utilization of local and traditional skills and

resources for encouragement, empowerment and women participation in small enterprises. This study recognizes that the economic empowerment of women is essential both to realize women's rights, and to achieve broader development goals such as economic growth, poverty reduction, health, education and welfare.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Poverty Alleviation, Employment Generation, Environment Regeneration, Advancement of Women,

I.Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries. Tourism contributes 5% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) and 7% of jobs worldwide. It accounts for 6% of the world's exports and 30% of the world's exports in services. In developing countries, tourism generates 45% of the total exports in services (UNWTO). Further, the emergence of tourism as an important instrument for sustainable human development including poverty alleviation, employment generation, environment regeneration and advancement of women and other disadvantaged groups in Galle, Sri Lanka.

Tourism presents both opportunities and challenges for gender equality and women's empowerment. The contribution of women in the business world has increased in recent years, although women are underrepresented in management and leadership. 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 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.

This research paper aims to examine the importance of women in the tourism sector, though

(a) Income generation and poverty elimination through tourism development

(b) Participation in tourism planning and management

(c) Women's rights, stereotypical images of women,

(d) Sharing experiences and networking

For the industrially developed countries, there has been little change in the actual participation of women in the tourism industry. Thus it is of paramount importance to shed laser like focus on income generation and poverty elimination through tourism development in particular to women's employment in tourism.

Women's share of management positions remains unacceptably low, with just a tiny proportion succeeding in breaking through the "glass ceiling". There are numerous inter linked factors, which help to maintain gender segregation of the labour market. Among them are gender stereotyping, traditional gender roles and gender identity - women are seen as being suitable for certain occupations and they seem themselves as suitable. In addition, traditional gender roles assign to women the main responsibilities for raising children, caring for the elderly, and doing household work. Thus, women are often forced to choose casual labour, part-time and seasonal employment.

Apart from developing good governance, income generation is the important motive for participation by women in the tourism industry. In most destination areas in Galle, the gains for the local community seem to come from the informal sector or the formal sector owned or organised by the communities.

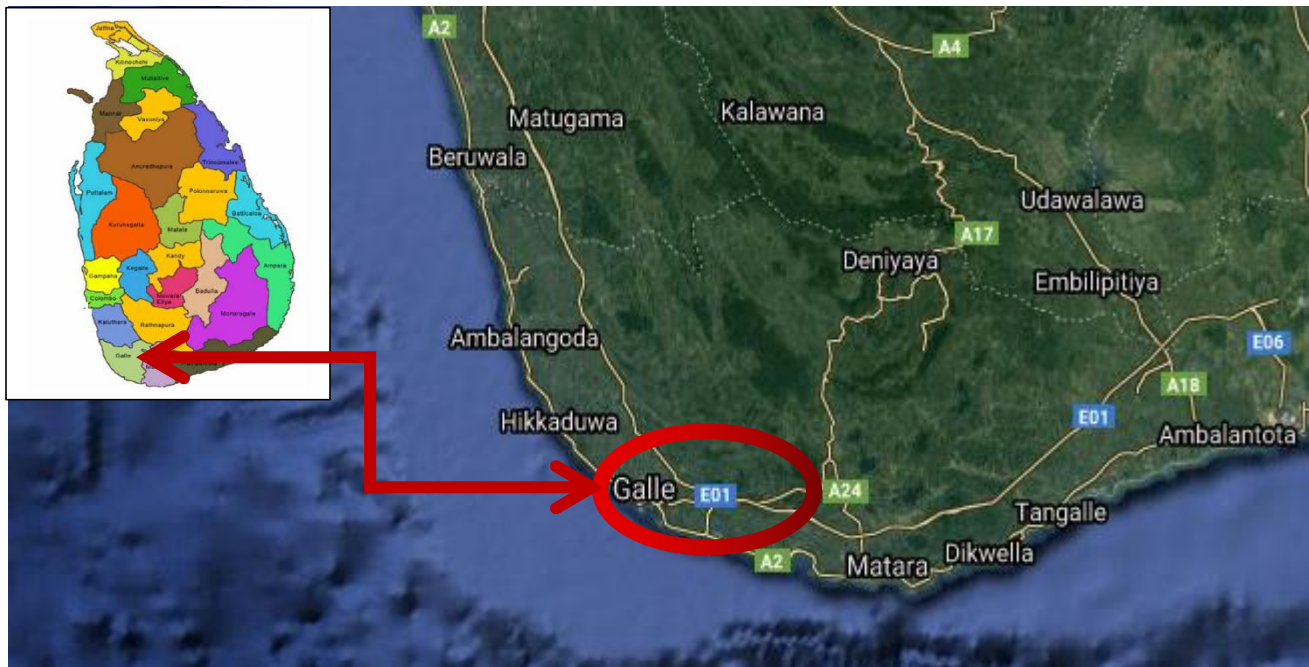
The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) must form the basis of addressing human rights and women's rights issues in tourism. Women can suffer specific discrimination within the tourism sector. As observations in this report shows, women are consistently denied positions of leadership and responsibility within the industry, they are concentrated in low skilled and low paid occupations, they are being objectified as part of the tourism "package" and they can have their traditional roles perpetuated within an industry that feeds on uncomplicated images. Tourism can violate women's rights, but it can also be used to challenge traditional roles and to empower women, in economic, social, cultural and political terms. The study shows that women found a voice and independence through getting involved in tourism activities - by becoming part of decision-making processes and carving out new roles in their families, homes and within local power structures.

II. Methodology

A. Study Area

Situated in the southwest of Sri Lanka about 100 km south of Colombo, the city of Galle is on the shores of the Indian Ocean. It is constructed on a rocky peninsula which houses a natural port to which access is complicated by the presence of massive coral reefs. The essential layout of the city was established by the Dutch in 1669. Since the 18th century, Galle has had the appearance of a fortified stronghold. Due to its location and glorious remnants of history it has become an ideal tourist attraction. Sinhala, Tamil and English are the official and most widely spoken language. 50 respondents had been selected randomly as the sample units from the tourism industry in Galle city for interviewing.

Map of the Study Area



It was found that this area of tourism is particularly suitable to stress the integrated approach to environmental, social and economic aspects of the concept of sustainable tourism development. The tourism industry represents a huge economic factor and its environmental and social impacts are obvious and have been well documented. In addition, integrating gender perspectives into the discussion of tourism is particularly important as the tourism industry is one major employer of women, offers various opportunities for independent income generating activities, and at the same time affects women's lives in destination communities.

B. Research Instruments

Primary data were collected through a series of steps to collect authentic data. The data for this project were collected using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies: interviews with local residents, community leaders, and owners/managers of tourism businesses; participant observation; household surveys. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse data. Secondary data were gathered from previous researches, research papers, reports, text books, encyclopaedias, journals, dictionaries and websites.

III.Results

The below stated demographic characteristics of the women in Galle could be spotted in the randomly selected group .

No	Factors	Percentage
i	Age Group	
	0 to 19	22.0
	20 to 29	48.0
	30 and above	30.0
ii	Position in the family	
	First person	44.2
	Second and other	55.8
iii	Marital status	
	Married	53.80
	Unmarried	46.20
iv	The income level of employee (monthly)	
	Rs 0 to 4999	58.80
	Rs. 5000 to 9999	35.30
	Rs. 10000 and Above	5.90

Table 1- Demographic Characteristics of Women in Tourism Sector in Galle

Table 1 reveals that involvement of women employees' in tourism falls in the age group of 20 to 29 and it is maximum than other groups which are evident in the Galle. Most of the women are the second child of the family in the tourism sector as workers. It reveals that among worker of age 19 to 40 plus, the unmarried was 46.2 percent, whereas 53.80 percent majority of workers are married. Nature of family is one of the most important factors for analyzing the

characteristics of the study respondents. Women workers, who are involved in this sector, have a maximum number of families up to five people's family. Among the various social characteristics of respondents, ethnic composition is a major component which directly affects in knowledge, attitude, behaviours, and status and in many more elements of life.

Further the below data of the employment situation of women in Tourism in Galle could also be vividly seen.

No	Employment Situation	Percentage
i	Women' proprietorship	
	Hotel, lodge, and resort	33.87
	Travel and trekking	36.74
	Others	29.39
ii	The working situation of an employee	
	Sweeper	21.2
	Saleswoman	1.9
	Manager	15.4
	Waiter	61.5
iii.	Working hours of employee	
	8	40.4
	10	44.2
	12	15.4
iv .	Staff in a business firm	
	More male	81.25
	More female	12.50
	Equal	6.25

Table 2 -Employment Situation of Women in Tourism in Galle .

According to the above table it is proved that the women are working in the lower hierarchical positions as unskilled and semiskilled workers more in Galle. Table 2 reveals that out of the total self-employed women in tourism sector, nearly 71 percent owned hotel, lodge, resort, travel and trekking agencies. Also, the maximum numbers of workers involved in the work waiters'. Generally, a worker works almost ten to twelve hours in this sector for serving the customer. 81. 25 percent of business has more male employees than female, whereas only limited percent indicates the low involvement of women in the tourism field as an employee.

A worker in the tourism sector especially joins for earning of money for the family whereas 25.0 percent looks to stand on own foot. There is a positive response of the owner towards the involvement of women employee in the tourism sector as employees. Table 3 shows that women need money to operate their family and so they involve in this sector to earn money and works almost ten to twelve hours in this sector to just earn five thousand below.

No	Factors	Percentage
i	Cause of joining the work	
	Earn money	50.0
	Conflict	1.9
	Leave home	5.8
	Uneducated	1.9
	Freedom to live	25.0
	Other causes	15.4
ii	Causes of involvement	
	Earn money	31.25
	Freedom to live	37.50
	Other reason	31.25
iii	Causes of selection of work	
	Easy work	48.1
	Good salary	13.5
	Transportation facility	3.8
	Others	23.1

Table 3-Reason and Causes of Women in Tourism

Table 4 explains the possibility of women's empowerment, encouragement and their satisfaction in the tourism sector.

No	Factors	Percentage
i	The opportunity to work available	
	Self	48.1
	Friend	19.2
	Relative	28.8
	Others	3.8
ii	Level of satisfaction	
	Yes	88.5
	No	11.5

Table 4 -Motivation towards Tourism Sectors

Most of the women employees join in this sector as an employee by their own effort whereas 28.8 percent search the job with the help of their friends. The workers attain satisfaction in this job due to the problem of availability of vacancies in other sectors and the level of income. It seems that women are encouraged to join in this sector of business since there are more vacancies available in the field.

IV.Discussion

However, 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.

The key overall findings of the study are:

- i. Women make up a large proportion of the formal tourism workforce.
- ii. Women are well represented in service and clerical level jobs but poorly represented at professional levels.
- iii. Women in tourism are typically earning 15% to 20% less than their male counterparts
- iv. The tourism sector has almost twice as many women employers as other sectors
- v. Women make up a much higher proportion of workers in tourism than in other sectors
- vi. A large amount of unpaid work is being carried out by women in family tourism businesses

In terms of employment, we establish 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 was found that women are almost twice as likely to be employers in the tourism industry as 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 study finds that women are contributing a large amount of unpaid work in tourism family businesses, especially when compared to other sectors.

It was found that tourism has the potential to be a vehicle for the empowerment of women in Galle. It 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. Globally, 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 , Chief Executive Officers are women, and only one in four tourism industry associations have a woman chair. Fortunately in Sri Lanka ,Tourism Chief is a well accomplished female with an elegant personality who is the resounding success of Tourism industry.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion it is acknowledging the problem of gender segregation of labour markets is a general one should not mean that it is not addressed when discussing tourism. Bringing the necessary changes about requires efforts in all sectors. However, the tourism industry seems to be a particularly good "candidate" for engaging in efforts towards the advancement of women. Due to its size, its rapid growth and its extremely diverse and dynamic nature, the tourism industry has an enormous flexibility. This can enable the industry to develop key initiatives for the advancement of women so that other industries can benefit from initiatives and strategies in the tourism sector as models for their own development. The high percentage of women in the tourism workforce in Galle provides a necessary fundament for the further advancement of women.

Promoting good practices more effectively and sharing lessons learnt from experiences is a definite need in order to support sustainable tourism development. The need for networking, exchange and mutual support of women being active in setting up income generating activities but often also with the challenges of altering their traditional roles in their communities by generating independent income, becoming a "leader" or a "business woman", there is an understandable need for mutual support and exchange of strategies how to meet these challenges.

State support in terms of favourable policy environment and financial resources is also necessary to enable the women harness more benefits from tourism. We wish to re echo the idea that; empowering women results into an empowered nation, region and world. This is because it is undeniable that women uphold society by preserving culture and environment through their daily interaction with nature and society-also revealed by the cases in this report. It is on this basis that we advocate for more proactive ways to enable women empowerment by tapping into the lucrative tourism business for the benefit of the entire globe.

There is a huge possibility of utilization of local and traditional skills and resources for encouragement, empowerment and women participation in small enterprises. Women's indigenous or traditional skills and handicraft skills of women should be used to make tourists oriented products and services that could improve as professionalism by providing a good opportunity for economic empowerment of women. Therefore, government agencies, NGOs and INGOs including social organization have to organize women empowerment and development programme.

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