



Opportunities and Challenges for Women Empowerment in Tourism Industry in India

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Abstract:

The tourism industry in India is a significant contributor to the country's economic growth and cultural diversity. As the sector continues to expand, it presents a unique opportunity to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Recognizing the potential of women in driving sustainable development, various initiatives and policies have been implemented to foster their active participation in this thriving industry. The present research papers throws light on the importance of tourism industry to the economy, opportunities and challenges for women empowerment in the tourism industry in India.

Key Words: Women Empowerment, Tourism industry, opportunities & challenges etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

The growth of tourism industry is not only significant contributors for the economic growth of the countries, it is also considered as key sector in promotion of women empowerment and gender equality in the country. In tourism industry, women participation is significant higher in the activities of hospitality, travel agencies and craft agencies. The encouragement of women more in this sector ensure consistent and fast growth of the industry due to advantages of diversified talent pool, rise in productivity and improves customer experiences. Historically, tourism industry has been suffered with gender stereo types where women have low paying and assigned subordinate roles. However, with recent initiation in the industry proved equal opportunities to women to occupy leadership positions in the industry.

In total tourism employment in world women workforce accounts to 40 percent i.e. around 38.60 million (WTT Report) whereas in India it around 46 percentage which is higher than world participation rate.

While gender means both men and women equally, most of the work in tourism development has been done in connection with women empowerment . Tourism is considered high in solving problems which are mostly faced by women and hence it was quoted as the “Vehicle for gender equality and women empowerment” . Works conducted argues that tourism industry involves jobs that mostly require human interactions and thus as women are known to be good at human skills, they are expected to perform better at duties assigned in the tourism industry. Tourism involves activities like guiding, providing accommodation and food which are mostly carried out by women as daily routines.

Hence, women are considered better while performing these activities . Also, tourism in most parts of the world is carried out as part-time activity. Because of this nature of the job, women can perform tourism-related activities in their spare time after finishing of the house chores. It is argued that women are more connected with nature than men given their constant interaction with nature while collecting food, fodder and taking care of the house premises . Thus, women are more compassionate towards nature than men. That is why most of the nature-based tourism like ecotourism, agro tourism, and rural tourism can be better handled by women. In developing countries where women face a lot of inequality and hardship, tourism has provided a ray of hope by empowering them economically, socially and politically. Additionally, tourism creates a lot of value chains that increase the opportunities for women to achieve both formal and informal employment. Tourism also provides women the power to voice the opinion and occupy various positions which is higher than any other sector.

Globally, gender equity has become the buzz word of development. With rising gender inequality resulting in stunted growth and greater dependence, it has become an established fact that if the world has to grow at a steady and sustainable pace, it is inevitable that woman must join the workforce and opportunities must be created in this regard . The same can be verified by the fact that United Nations has embraced gender equality as its 3rd goal of Millennium Development Goals and 5th goal of Sustainable Development Goals. The goal outlines a list of functions that need to be carried on to achieve gender equality. One such function is to “Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life” . The tourism industry is experiencing exponential growth, hence getting the tag of one of the sunrise industries in the world. T&T accounted for US\$7.6 trillion (equivalent to 10.2% of global GDP) and 292 million jobs which are estimated to be 1 in 10 jobs generated across the global economy. Consequently, the tourism industry has been advocated throughout academics and industry for its labor intensiveness an industry that reduces gender gaps . As per estimation by International Labor Organization of all the jobs generated through tourism directly or indirectly, women account for 60- 70% in total.

2. OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN TOURISM INDUSTRY

IN INDIA AND TELANGANA. Growth in the tourism industry brings various jobs, out of them some are suitable to the women in getting employment and become entrepreneurs.

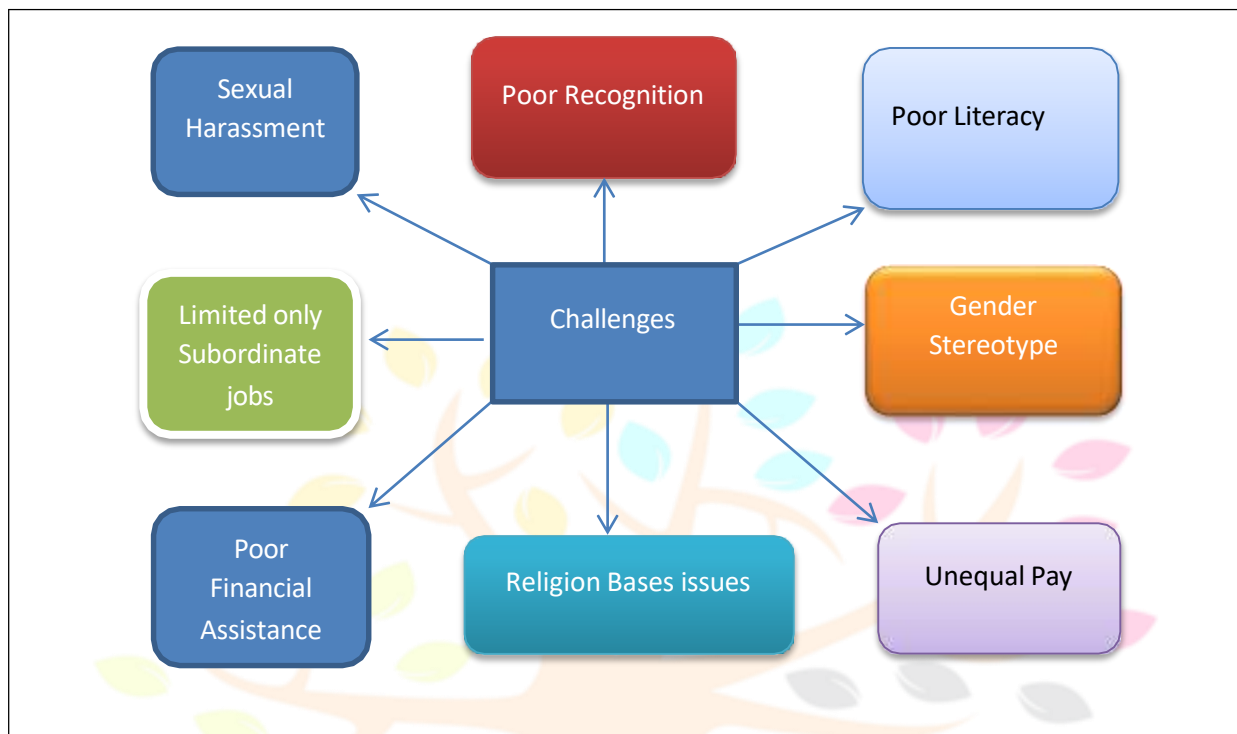
IMAGE 01: Opportunities for Women Empowerment Through Tourism

- **HOSPITALITY:** The development of tourism offers women entrepreneurs get various opportunities to generate revenue through offering various services as hospitality such as boutique hostels, leading culinary ventures.
- **TOUR GUIDING:** Women can be engaged in guiding the tours on the heritage and culture of tour places. This helps them to share knowledge and their experience in local areas earns income and employment.
- **HOME STATYS:** Tourism development helps the women operating homestays allows women to offer authentic and personalized experiences to travellers, fostering a connection between tourists and local communities.
- **HANDCRAFTS:** The tourism development attracts tourists from different counties in the world which provides a platform for women to showcase and sell their handcrafted goods, supporting their livelihoods and preserving local art forms.
- **ENTREPRENEURSHIP:** Tourism promotes entrepreneurship particularly women entrepreneurship who can start their own businesses in areas like tour operations, travel agencies, and eco-tourism initiatives, creating employment and economic opportunities.
- **MARKETING AND PROMOTION:** Tourism activities promote the economic activities local places which in turn rely on effective marketing, and women can play a crucial role in promoting tourism destinations, products, and services.

3. CHALLENGES FACING FOR WOMEN WMPOWERMENT IN TOURISM

INDUSTRY IN INDIA AND TELANGANA: Women in Tourism Industry exposed to various personal, job, family, socio-economic problems. Some of them are discussed here.

Image 02. Challenges of Women Empowerment in Tourism Industry



• **POOR LITERACY:** The tourism places were rich in heritage and culture in previous days, but, in today environment the people living around the tourism places have been neglected literacy point of view and suffering with low literacy. They are also have very low training and education regarding tourism aspects.

• **SEXUAL HARSSMENT:** This is another social problem facing by the women employees in tourism industry. In tourism industry, male tourist forcing the women employees for sex with them or doing different forms of sexual harassment. Cases of sexual harassment, asking for sexual or professional favours from women workers are on the rise in tourism industry now days increasing significantly

• **NO/POOR RECOGNICATION:** The efforts and success of women in tourism industry has been unnoticed not due to lack of talent or skills, but because of lack of opportunities and male dominance. Therefore, Women's contribution to family/community development should be often recognized and rewarded.

• **LIMITED ONLY SUBORDINATE JOBS:** In tourism industry majority of women employees are working only at sub-ordinate level and promotion of to next level is very low which is a great indication for women discrimination at work force. Therefore, non-discriminative promotion should be adopted in the tourism industry this promotion equal opportunities to women to occupy higher positions.

• **GENDER STEREOTYPE:** The active participation of women in tourism activities is very less due to stereo type character they build since their birth. This is one of the psychological barriers for the development of women employees in the industry as compared to men employees. The provision psychological counseling helps them to overcome this character and enhance active participation in the job activities.

• **UNEQUAL PAY:** There have been many instances where gender pay gap has been noticed in tourism industry. This discrimination must be abolished. Women are often made to do low paid, precarious, low status jobs in tourism because of gender stereotyping and male domination which results in women mostly doing cooking, cleaning or hospitality jobs.

• **POOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:** The availability and accessibility of finance to women is very difficulty as compared to men to grow as enterprises which is one of financial constraint facing by the women in tourism industry. However, recently government schemes like Mudra Yojana, Startups, stand ups, MSMEs special loans addressed these issues to the maximum possible.

• **RELIGION BASED ISSUES:** There is some religion-based issues have been facing by the women particularly in Muslim religion where strict conditions are followed and exposed to some religion conditions which making the to face some family and social barriers in tourism industry.

4. GOVERNMENT INITIATIONS TOWARDS EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA AND TELANGANA

a) **Breaking Gender Stereotypes in Tourism:** Historically, the tourism sector has been riddled with gender stereotypes, often relegating women to low-paying and subordinate roles. However, in recent years, concerted efforts have been made to shatter these stereotypes and provide equal opportunities for women in leadership positions. Numerous success stories of women entrepreneurs and executives in the tourism industry have emerged, inspiring the next generation of women to pursue their aspirations without fear of discrimination.

b) **Skill Development and Training:** One of the primary challenges faced by women seeking to enter the tourism industry is the lack of appropriate skills and training. To bridge this gap, several government and non-governmental organizations have collaborated to offer specialized training programs, workshops, and capacity-building initiatives. These programs not only equip women with the necessary technical skills but also focus on instilling confidence and leadership qualities.

c) **Promoting Women-Led Enterprise:** Recognizing the potential of women as drivers of change, several initiatives have been launched to support and promote women-led enterprises in the tourism sector. Financial institutions and government schemes have provided funding and support to encourage women entrepreneurs to establish and grow their businesses. These initiatives have not only empowered individual women but have also contributed to the overall socio-economic development of their communities.

d) **Enhancing Safety and Security for Women Travellers:** Ensuring the safety and security of women travellers is crucial for fostering women's participation in the tourism industry. The Indian government and various stakeholders have taken steps to improve safety measures and create a more welcoming environment for female tourists. Initiatives like women-only accommodations, dedicated helplines, and awareness campaigns have helped create a safer space for women travellers, contributing to India's reputation as a women-friendly tourist destination.

5. SUGGESTIONS FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN TOURISM INDUSTRY

For ensuring equal participation of women in the tourism industry many structural changes must take place. Some of the suggestive mechanisms have been cited below:

1. Government should Undertake reforms to provide women equal rights to economic resources like

loans, credits, bank services etc

2. The study suggest to organize regulr awareness camps to enhance gender sensitivity and women empowerment.
3. Providing a better work place for women and ensuring their safety and security in the workplace by Eliminate all forms of violence against all women.
4. To implement vaious measures to eliminate any form of discrimination against women.
5. Taking actions to recognize and value the unpaid works performed by a female employee in the workplace and provide remuneration or rewards.
6. To provide adequate motivation and psychological support of the friends and family must be extended for women workers in tourism industry.
7. Necessary actions must be taken to break the glass ceiling effect.
8. Extending the maternity leave period can be a good start to motivate better participation of women in workplace.
9. Usage of technology and upgraded communication methods for empowering women with information.
10. Adopting and strengthening of policies as well as enforceable legislations for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment must be a clause in every the tourism organization.

CONCLUSION

The empowerment of women in India's tourism industry is not only a matter of gender equality but also a vital component of sustainable economic growth and development. As women take on more prominent roles in the sector, the industry becomes more inclusive, diverse, and adaptable to changing trends. By providing equal opportunities, skill development, and support, India's tourism industry can harness the full potential of women, creating a brighter and more prosperous future for the nation as a whole. It is through the collaborative efforts of governments, organizations, and society that women's empowerment in the tourism industry can truly flourish and leave a lasting impact on India's social and economic landscape.

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