

AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES IN RELATION TO THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM SECTOR: A STUDY ON GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

This study aims to find out the socio-economic issues which are connected with the role of women in tourism sector all over the contemporary world using the qualitative method. The data and information have been collected from the secondary sources such as the existing literatures. vulnerability of gender discrimination and exploitation of women, inequity in the treatment in stereotyping jobs, closing up the gender gap in the certain economic activities, the informal economic activities of women in the travel and tourism industry, and overrepresentation of women in the jobs of low status are some of the socioeconomic issues which have been analyzed and found in this study. The potentiality of the travel and tourism industry so as to uplift the status of women socioeconomically, especially in the destinations of developing countries, is faced with some of the socio-economic issues connected with the women. The women employed in the travel and tourism should be protected and strengthened legally. Further, some of the laws relevant to the equity in the payment system, the regulations of minimum wages in the travel and tourism industrial sectors should be implemented with the highest attempts.

Keywords: Socioeconomic Issues, Travel and Tourism, Women, Global Context, Equity in Gender

01. Introduction

Rising awareness about the opportunities and restrictions being faced by women on the participation of women in the travel and tourism industrial sector can be achieved by the studies all over the world. The empowerment of women due to the development in the travel and tourism industry has been taken into the consideration of some of the international organizations.

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Thus, bilateral and multilateral donor agencies are keen and effective to promote the travel and tourism industry in the developing countries and thereby to empower the women socioeconomically. Some of the projects have been funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) so as to improve the travel and tourism industry along with the empowerment of women in the developing countries. A leading role has been taken by the World Bank (WB) in the development of travel and tourism and the discrimination of gender in the global context. Accordingly, some of the projects in connection with the empowerment of women through the development of the travel and tourism industry have been initiated by the WB in Sub-Saharan African and Latin American countries (Ferguson, 2011).

It is found that the serious issues related to the discrimination in gender in the tourism activities have been taken into consideration by only a less number of government authorities working with the travel and tourism industrial sector in their respective countries. Some of the countries are having and implementing the initiatives of sustainable travel and tourism industry in which the component of equity in gender is added, but it is in small scale. Only the country of Mauritius has taken the empowerment of gender into their primary programme in the development of travel and tourism (Peeters, 2009).

UNWTO (The World Tourism Organization) is a specialized agency in United Nations and also is a foremost international entity which is playing major roles in developing and promoting the sustainability, responsibility, and global accessibility in the travel and tourism industry. Further, UNWTO is performing and serving as one of the international forum in order to handle the issues of tourism strategies and policies. And also, a source to derive the practical knowledge and skill in terms of the travel and tourism is immensely accessible from UNWTO. In the UN Millennium Development Goals introduced in year 2008, UNWTO deliberately responded to include the programme and schedule of 'Women in Tourism' indicator which is one of the development indicators added with the UN Millennium Development Goals in order to achieve and ensure the socio-economic development in a country.

'The *Global Code of Ethics in Tourism*' has been designed, promoted, and developed by UNWTO. Thus, it is a set of ideologies which target at the maximization of positive socio-economic impacts caused by the travel and tourism industry and the minimization of negative socio-economic impacts caused by the travel and tourism industry in the contemporary world.

Therefore, the travel and tourism industry paves the different ways for the opportunities and the strengths being enjoyed by the women as well as the challenges, threats, and risks being faced by the women in the global context. Accordingly to Hemmati, United Kingdom prepared an initiative for the seventh session of UNCSD (UN Commission on Sustainable Development) with regard to the perspectives of gender and the travel and tourism industry (Hemmati, 1999).

Objective of the Study

To find out the socio-economic issues which are connected with the role of women in travel and tourism industry all over the contemporary world.

Methodology of the Study

This study is based on the secondary sources under the descriptive analysis. The data and information for this study have been collected from the exiting secondary sources in relation to the burning issues connected with the role of women in tourism sector in the present world. Accordingly, the secondary sources so collected and amalgamated in this study have been analyzed and viewed so as to achieve the objective of this study.

Literature Review

The review of the following literatures is studied on the basis of this study. There are a limited number of studies connected with the socioeconomic issues in relation to the role of the women in the travel and tourism industry in the global context. In particular, this study elaborately and deeply analyses to find out the socioeconomic issues faced by the women in the context of improvement and development of travel and tourism industry.

Lucy Ferguson (2009) aims to find the potentiality of the travel and tourism industry to the contribution of strengthening the equity in gender and the empowerment of women, and the anxieties and issues caused by the travel and tourism using qualitative method. It is concluded in this study that many women do not experience a fruitful remedy for the economic empowerment due to the improvement and development in the travel and tourism industry. Further, he concluded that even though the development and improvement in the travel and tourism industry might lead to make the equity in the gender relationship in the community under the basis of slight economic terms, but in the society there is a profound discrimination in gender which is fuelled by improvement and development of travel and tourism industry.

Thuy Tien Do Le (2017) aims to find out the under-representation of women in hotels' senior management using descriptive analysis under qualitative method. He found out that the statistics collected to achieve the objective of this study showed that the lacking of female representation in the top level managers in the hotel industry which plays major roles in the travel and tourism industry, although The contemporary travel and tourism industry is made up of women more.

UBO (2015) aims to find out the gender barriers in respect of the participation of women in employment opportunities and the facilities of education in travel and tourism industry in the country of Kosovo using qualitative method aided with the data and information collected from the secondary sources. It is found in this study that the travel and tourism industry was an instrumental economic drive in Kosovo. And also, due to the improvement and development of tourism in this country, the female employees are lack of education to compete with the employment in the travel and tourism industry.

Sony (2012) examines the relationship between women and men in the travel and tourism industry along with the special focuses on the preference of women and challenges faced by the women on the basis of the roles performed by them in the country of Nepal using qualitative method. It is found and concluded that harassment from close relatives, crucial failure in managing family and employment were some of the issues and changed by the female employees employed in the travel and tourism sector in Nepal.

Thomas Baum (2013) aims to find out and highlight the issues faced by women in their workforce in the travel and tourism industry, especially in the catering and hotels using qualitative method. He found in this study, parity in wage, isolation of occupations in gender, opportunities in career development were some of the primary issues found within the travel and tourism industry.

Socio-Economic Issues

The different categories of women have been facing a number of considerable threats, challenges, and risks along with the strengths and opportunities in the travel and tourism sector in the world. In this respect, this study elaborately analyzes to find out the socio-economic issues connected with the discrimination of gender, especially of women, along with the improvement and development of travel and tourism industrial sector in the contemporary global context. Exploitation of women, stereotyping of gender, better work and decent employment, informality in employment, and low status in jobs are some of the socioeconomic issues found and analyzed further to fulfill the objective of this study.

Exploitation:

The exploitation in relation to the women in day to day life can be primarily categorized into physical exploitations, sexual exploitations, and mental exploitations. In the tourism sector all over the world, there are different types of exploitations being experienced by the women engaged in the tourism sector. Sexual discrimination, prostitution, sexual harassment, dangerous working conditions, slavery, human trafficking, and poor wages are some of the kinds of exploitations being challenged by the innocent women owing to the development of tourism sector in the present world. Most of the women and children being trapped with the severe poverty in some of the countries being developed along with the development of tourism sector in those countries are predominantly susceptible and prone to these challenges while they are earning their lives through the means of the engagement in the tourism sectors in their respective countries (UNWTO, 2011).

The sexual engagement of women in the tourism sector can elaborately relieve their struggling nature in their present livelihood and can lead to an instant provision for daily present living, but it is unfortunately noted that HIV/AIDS is one of the deadly communicable diseases which can result in the long term suffering due to the unprotected sexual relationship being likely originated from the origin of the development of tourism sector in the respective countries. Further, some of the other sexually transmitted illnesses, addicted to hard drugs, stricken ever with impoverishment, and social displacement are also some of the threats faced by the vulnerable women being affected by the flourishing tourism sectors in every nook and corner of the world.

Some of the poverty stricken families are deliberately demanded and needed by the rich tourists from the guest courtiers to be migrated to their host countries along with the accompaniment of family members. In some of the destinations of tourism, the women and children are trafficked and kidnapped so as to use them as sex slaves (Ryan and Hall, 2010). There is estimation from UNICEF (2007) which exposes that unfortunately children are affected by the commercial sexual exploitation. Accordingly, around 2 million of children around the world are used by force in the sexual practices (UNICEF, 2007). The countries such South East Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America are mostly affected by this commercial sexual practices.

There are some of the global networks which are collaboratively working so as to combat against the exploitation of the girl children. Accordingly, ECPAT is recognized as one such global network in which many organizations and individuals join together to rescue the children from trafficking, prostitution, pornography.

The sexual abuses of children are restricted and prevented by the awareness being made by ECPAT by using the code of conduct which is globally standardized among governments, tour operators, and hotel workers. From 1990s, this global network has been inaugurating its operations with the tourism industrial sectors all over the world with the intention of combating such issues being faced by the girl children being trapped with the development of tourism industry.

In year 1998, ECPAT in Sweden elaborately defined the Code of Conduct consisting of the provisions for the Protection of Children free from sexual abuses in the tourism sector along with the operations being assisted by UNICEF and UNWTO who are the active and consultative partners in this connection of sexual exploitation of children. More than 900 companies are taking part in 37 countries in defining the Code of Conduct as of June 2010 (UNWTO, 2010). One of the South East Asian countries such as Thailand has recorded a progress resulted in the expedition of ECPAT and the Code of Conduct. The progress has been achieved due to the onslaughts of police and the legal actions taken against the illegal human trafficking. Presently, some of the countries such as India, Brazil, The Gambia, and Kenya are identified as some of the destinations in the travel and tourism which are facing considerable threats of illegal human trafficking (Kibicho, 2005).

Stereotyping of Gender:

In the travel and tourism sector, the airline industrial sector is one of the instrumental segregated sectors. In this industry, the positions of ticketing, sales, and flight attendant are mostly dominated by the women. At the same time, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), pilots, and managers are predominantly dominated by men in the airline industrial sector. Conversely, there is a considerable progress in this nature of domination of men in the airline industry all over the world. Out of about 80,000 pilots, around 4,000 of pilots are estimated as women pilots around the world. And also, there are 450 captains. In 2007, the woman pilot was recognized, appointed, and accepted as the first woman pilot in Japan. In Jordan, the first flight was flown by Royal Jordanian Airlines with all the crews of women in year 2009. In comparison with the men, in the airline industrial sector linked immediately with the travel and tourism, the contribution and share of women participation are relatively lesser (UNWTO, 2010).

In most of the countries, the women are hardly found as travel and tour guides and there are considerable barriers for them to the entry of this type of employment opportunity in the travel and tourism industrial sector. In the developing countries, the travel and tourism guide is always perceived as one of the favourable professions in this industry.

The profession of travel and tourism guide is one of the primary earning sources because of the generous tips being made and circulated by the tourists. This desirable profession among the women is hardly found in many countries and therefore it is male concentrated rather than the domination of female. Thus, the females in this profession have been significantly discriminated.

In the travel and tourism industrial sector, the rights of female travel and tour guides are protected in the country of Malaysia. Accordingly, there is an association formed in Malaysia so as to safeguard the rights of women travel and tour guides. MWTGA (Malaysian Women Tourist Guides Association) was officially inaugurated in 2007. A safe environment for working with the tourists and the relevant society, ensuring the equity in the payment for the female travel and tour guides, and also ensuring the equality in the employment opportunity between female and males travel and tour guides have been effectively advocated by MWTGA. One of the campaigns organized by the MWTGA can be exemplified as one of the movements so as to safeguard the rights of the female travel and tour guides. Accordingly, the "No Room Share" is one of such campaigns being initiated and launched by MWTGA in Malaysia in quest of the concentration on the safety and security of female travel and tour guides. A significant success has been achieved by MWTGA through this campaign.

In Malaysia, there was a recent announcement from the Ministry of Tourism that the licenses of the travel and tour operators who are persistent in the continuation of insisting on sharing rooms in the male and female travel and tour guides would be cancelled out (MWTGA, 2009). Even if there are some of the campaigns with the intension of demanding for the equal opportunities without any gender discrimination in the travel and tourism industry in the world arena, still ensuring the equity between male and female is unfortunately challenged by the respective associations.

Decent Work:

'Better work' and 'decent employment' is another social issue being faced by the women in the travel and tourism industrial sector in the global context. Thus, it is instrumental to address that the vision of the travel and tourism sector is not just to generate the employment opportunities among the women or equity among the women or equal concerns about the women in their places of work, but it is insisted on 'better work' and 'decent employment' wherever they are working for their daily living in the travel and tourism sector.

ILO (International Labour Organization) has profoundly defined that the concept of 'Decent Work' is productive and creative work for the gender (male and female) under the nature of security, safety, equity, freedom, and respecting the human being. Further, according to ILO, the opportunities available for productive work, the income earned fairly from the productive work, the safety and security granted by the work in the working places, the social protection provided by the work for the employees and their families, the development of individuals offered by the work for better hope, the integration of society encouraged by the work, the freedom of expressing the anxieties of people, the freedom of organizing and participating in the decisions taken against the life of the women and men, and equity in opportunities and treatments for all of the people guaranteed by the work are included in the decent work (International Labour Organization, 2010).

In addition, 'better work' is defined as it is a concentration being paid on the risky workers employed in any of the productive activities in the developing countries. The 'better work' is a partnership programme signed between International Finance Corporation (IFC) and International Labour Organization (ILO). They have been working together so as to develop the labour standards in compliance with the supply chains in the global context and to help in the development strategies which are compliant with the development of the poor in the world. And also, the rights and entitlements of the workers are safeguarded and they are the benefits distributed so as to assist low income earners.

Accordingly, the rights of the workers and the women's economic empowerment should be focused in connection with the decent work. In relation to the global gender gap, the countries all over the world has been ranked as per the opportunities and participation in economic activities, the attainment in education, the status of health and survival, and the empowerment in participation of politics. The Global Gender Gap Report (2010) has exposed and reported that 93 percent of the gender gap in global education and 96 percent of gender gap in global health has been brought to the nature of closure in the contemporary world. However, the closure of the gender gap in the opportunities, strengths and participation in the economic activities is only up to 60 percent. And also, the closure of the gender gap in politics has been recorded up to only 16 percent. The co-author of the Global Gender Gap Report (2010), named Saadia Zahidi remarks that: "If women are now starting to be as health and as educated as men, it makes senses to now be ensuring that they are part of the economy and part of decision-making processes" (World Economic Forum, 2010). Thus, the closing up the gender gap in the certain economic activities in connection with the operations of travel and tourism are still faced with the challenges and threats all over the world.

05.4 Informality in Employment

The overrepresentation of women has been recognized and identified in the sectors which are found as the informal economic sectors of economies in the world. The informal employment of women in non-agricultural sectors is found in the developing countries in the world. Accordingly, 86%, 84%, and 58% of women are found in the informal employment of women in the non-agricultural sectors in regions such as Asia, Sub Saharan Africa, and Latin America respectively. In whole, 60 percent of women are estimated in the developing countries to be found in the informal employment of the non agricultural sectors (International Labour Organization, 2002).

The potentiality of contribution in the travel and tourism sectors in the world is better found in the employment of informal sectors and also the potentiality of providing well-mannered strengths and opportunities for the entrepreneurial attempts. Accordingly to the report of the International Labour Organization (ILO), an estimation of more than one third of the total employment in the informal sectors is found in the service sector. Out of more than one third, more of employment opportunities are available in the travel and tourism related works in the world (UNWTO, 2010).

The employment opportunities in agricultural work, janitorial work, making of souvenir, positions of security guard, and catering work are available for the unskilled workers of women. Otherwise, it would be very hard for them to find the employment opportunities due to the absence of the improper education among the unskilled women. The economic activities in the products of handicrafts which are flexible in the travel and tourism work can be traditionally utilized by the women so as to improve the living standard of the women.

However, the informal economic activities of women in the travel and tourism sectors are faced with a considerable number of risks. That is, all the opportunities of women in the informal employment are not positively perceived because many of them can't be paid in this sector. In addition, the social or economic strengths of women cannot be achieved and succeeded if, in particular, the traditional gendered division of labour is strengthened within the community and the household (UNWTO, 2010). Thus, the informal employment opportunities which are considerably available for women in travel and tourism sectors in the world can't be utilized for the empowerment of women.

Low-status in Jobs

In the pyramid of employment opportunities in the travel and tourism sector in the world, the representation of the women in the employment is very lower (Richter, 1995). The academic works carried out in the developing countries support this finding.

In the travel and tourism industrial sector, according to the findings of Hollingsworth in the Bahamas, in comparison to men, more women are working, but the earnings of women per week is US\$ 344 and the men are earning US\$ 375 per week. In the travel and tourism industrial sector in the Bahamas, there is also a higher magnitude of gender stereotyping. The women in this industry are paid lower than the men. The women are working mainly in clerical and janitorial works being paid with lower wages but the men have occupied some of the highly paid positions such as the managers in restaurants and hotels, gardeners, and the machine operators. The same results have been found in the country of Jamaica as well (Hollingsworth, 2006).

According to Li and Leung, the ratio of employment opportunities in the travel and tourism industrial sector in Singapore is that out of 77 employees in the hotel industry; only two of them are females who are positioning the general managers in the hotel industrial sector. In the travel and tourism industry, there are some of the barriers for the females to be entered. Entry of the female into some of the careers in the hospitality management such as stereotyping in gender role, discrimination in jobs, risks of managing family life, and long hours of duty. Therefore, the entry of the women into the travel and tourism industry in the contemporary world is immensely challenged by those difficulties and risks. In addition, it is noted that there are a lack of opportunities for the women to be socialized with the high level male managers in the hierarchical positions in the hospitality industry. Thus, they are not in a position to get trainings, advices, and proper guidance from the male managers in their career (Li, et. al. 2001).

In some of the country in the world, the travel and tourism industry requires more qualifications from female candidates applied for the jobs than the male candidates applied for the same jobs. Accordingly, in Belize, the women applied for the jobs in the travel and tourism industry are required by the respective officials so as to possess the some of the more qualification than the male applied for the same jobs in the industry. According to Woods and Cavanaugh (1999), the 1,555 managers in the hospitality industry have been surveyed with regard to the gender discrimination in the travel and tourism industry.

It is found that 40 percent of the hospitality managers reported that during the time of promotion of managers and in the salaries of the managers, the gender discrimination is commonly practiced by the respective officials. And also, 80 percent of women reported that they are discriminated by gender and harassed sexually in the present work places (Woods and Cavanaugh, 1999).

Some of the researchers found that the top level managers of women in five star hotels are rather lesser than the top level managers of male in the hotels. In the country of Egypt, this situation is prevailing. Conversely, in smaller hotels in the country, more of the women are top level managers. Therefore, the barriers into the entry of the top level managers of women into the five star hotels are hindering the advancement of the women in their careers in Egypt. Further, the association-ship at their work place, the discrimination in gender, lack of network accessibility, and lack of training support are identified as some of the barriers to the entry of this hotel industry in the country (Kattara, 2005).

Findings

In this study, there are different categories of socio-economic issues found over the women due to the improvement and development in the travel and tourism industry in the global context. In this respect, vulnerability of gender discrimination and exploitation of women, inequity in the treatment in stereotyping jobs, closing up the gender gap in the certain economic activities, the informal economic activities of women in the travel and tourism industry, and overrepresentation of women in the jobs of low status are some of the socioeconomic issues which have been analyzed and found in this study. The exploitation of women and female children and overrepresentation of women in the jobs of low status are the socio-economic issues found by the researchers of this study to be serious in the respective countries in the global context.

Conclusion

An instrumental categorical employment can be retained by women in the travel and tourism industry in the contemporary global context. The potentiality of the travel and tourism industry so as to uplift the status of women socioeconomically, especially in the destinations of developing countries, is faced with some of the socio-economic issues connected with the women. An emphasis is highlighted that an instrumental role is played by the improvement of travel and tourism industry in facing the changes and issues related women in the global context.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the instrumental economic roles of women in the travel and tourism industry should be made aware of in the global context. The women employed in the travel and tourism should be protected and strengthened legally. Further, some of the laws relevant to the equity in the payment system, the regulations of minimum wages in the travel and tourism industrial sectors should be implemented with the highest attempts. And also, in the entrepreneurial and business operations, the women should be accepted favourably in society. The women in the travel and tourism industrial business operations should be encouraged in order to be united in contact with the cooperatives, societies, and associations which can assist so as to get support from the government on the female employees' behalf. Healthy working conditions and environment should be safeguarded and strengthened in the travel and tourism industrial sectors. In addition, convenient time, the requirements of maternity leave, accessibility to the care of the mothers for their children, the option of working of women from their immediate residences should take into consideration in the travel and tourism industry. Conclusively, the scrutinizing system over women on the socioeconomic impacts of the travel and tourism operational activities in the respective countries in global context should be authoritative.

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