

RURAL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN TOURISM SECTOR: FINDINGS FROM CASE STUDIES

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Abstract-- Women entrepreneurships important for the development of our country. A majority of the Indian women live in villages. Therefore, the development of rural women entrepreneurship is necessary for the true development of our country's economy. The Government of India and the Planning commission of India acknowledged that rural women entrepreneurship is to be promoted for the economic development. The rural women of India are trying to foray into entrepreneurship. However, the problems encountered by the rural women entrepreneurs are completely different from those of their urban counterparts. Tourism sector can provide lot of chances for the rural women development through entrepreneurship. This phenomenon of contemporary practices in tourism is deliberated about in this study bringing forward the four case studies of rural women entrepreneurs in tourism sector. The focus of the present paper is to gain insight into the concept of rural women entrepreneurship in tourism sector focusing on to examine the need of rural women entrepreneurs in tourism, barriers as well as difficulties experienced by rural women, issues and challenges in contemporary practices in tourism and to suggest measures for women empowerment from tourism.

Keywords: rural women entrepreneurship, contemporary practices in tourism sector, need, issues, challenges, measures

1. Background

In India, a majority of the rural women are working in agricultural sector. The agriculture work is seasonal in nature. As a result, many rural women are looking for alternative sources of employment when no agricultural work exists. Tourism is a labour intensive industry which generates huge opportunities for work. Tourism sector is highly labor-intensive creating direct as well as indirect jobs. According to the report published by the Indian Tourism Department, the tourism sector at present is providing employment to 45 Lakhs people, of these 25 Lakhs are having direct employment and 17 Lakhs are indirectly employed. Another peculiar aspect of the tourism sector is that it can accommodate huge female labor force. Tourism has largely contributed to job creation especially in remote and rural areas of India wherein it is difficult to set up factories like the rural frontiers of Himachal Pradesh, North East, Kerala and Rajasthan.

Based on the above observations, the present study is undertaken to better understand the concept of rural women entrepreneurship in tourism sector. It also serves the objective of empowering them and giving them economic freedom on one hand while increasing the Tourism potential in the rural areas on the other hand.

1.1 Significance

The Indian Tourism sector contributes 15.24 Lakh crores to India's GDP by 2017. The Forex earnings from the tourism industry were 25,000 crores [1]. The tourism industry created 38.8 million direct and indirect jobs. As tourism is a labour-intensive industry thus able to employ huge female labour force, it is essential to investigate as to how tourism sector can be an important tool in providing entrepreneurial opportunities for the rural women.

Thus, this paper explores the various issues faced by the rural women entrepreneurs along with understanding the challenges faced by them in tourism sector in India. The focus of the present paper is to gain insight into the concept of rural women entrepreneurship in tourism sector focussing on to examine the need of rural women entrepreneurs in tourism, barriers as well as difficulties experienced by rural women, issues and challenges in contemporary practices in tourism and to suggest measures for women empowerment from tourism.

This research assumes significance by highlighting the instances of rural women entrepreneurship in tourism sector in four diverse states of India i.e. Himachal Pradesh in the north, Kerala in the south and Rajasthan in the west and Sikkim in the east.

This study examines as to how small rural women entrepreneurs in the tourism industry overcame the challenges in different states and diverse regions of India and also recognizes the standard basis for the triumph of the rural women tourist entrepreneurs.

While different research analysis pointed out that rural women are engaged in the entrepreneurial development of our country, but very few literature reviews are available about the collaboration of rural women in tourism entrepreneurship.

2. Literature Review

Pizzati and Funck (2002) observed that provincial female entrepreneurship and business enterprise development is significant to human wealth development. Fielden and Davidson (2006) stated that rural women have attempted into entrepreneurship only recently. Kanmony (2010) felt that in any case, the advancement of female entrepreneurship in rural areas is low in India. Equations (2007) in its report on the worldwide information on the count of male and female working in the tourism industry recommend that the travel industry division is an especially significant sector where 46 % of the working people comprise of women.

Becker (2004) observed that in the travel industry area ladies are generally committed to employments like housekeeping, front-work area, providing food and clothing administrations which don't generally require high abilities and are low paying and cliché occupations.

Thien (2009) felt that in the travel industry for the most part, relatively less consideration has been given to the rural women as entrepreneurs specifically. Ibid states that to understand the concept of rural women entrepreneurship and practice the same in the tourism sector is troublesome and risky.

Becker (2004) observed that it is important to recognize the financial commitment of rural women and guarantee for them credit accessibility, improvising the skills, market accessibility, enhanced integrated development, and cooperatives to build their dealing power, and to guarantee that their economic assistance needs are met is basic. Motiee Langrudi (2005) stated that to understand the impact of rural tourism as an industry on the position of rural women we need to consider whether it can serve as a development agent in terms of reducing rural poverty, uplifting the status of rural women by adding to or becoming more important than their agriculture-related skills, and/or promoting many other changes that are urgently needed for the up-liftment of rural women. Becker (2004) further observed that tourism sector can remarkably contribute for the empowerment of rural women by including the rural women self- help groups.

Thus, if more rural women are absorbed into the tourism and hospitality industry, that has a propounding impact on the economic development of our country. Since tourism is a labour intensive and serviceability driven industry, it has immense potential for local rural women that could eventually lead to the improvement of their lives.

3. Methodology

The study is conducted based on the secondary data like tourism journals, newspaper, tourism related articles, internet, books on tourist sector, published reports of travel industry, world bank observations on tourism developments.

3.1 Limitations of the study

The paper is dependent mainly on the secondary sources of data. And hence no exploratory data is available and only conceptual information can be ascertained. Also, the study is limited to four states i.e. Himachal Pradesh in the north, Kerala in the south, Sikkim in the east and Rajasthan in the west.

3.2 Objectives

It is necessary to increase the opportunity of self-employment for educated and uneducated women through the development of rural entrepreneurship. Also, the self-employed women entrepreneur creates not only her employment but also creates employment opportunities to other rural people. It is most important to create a favorable atmosphere for a healthy development of entrepreneurship.

It is important to expand the chance of self-employment for Enlighten and uneducated ladies through the advancement of rural entrepreneurship. Likewise, the independently employed female business person generates not only her work but also makes business chances to other rural individuals. It is generally imperative to make a favorable atmosphere for a solid advancement of entrepreneurship.

However, this study attempts to study how the rural women in the four diverse parts in India i.e. the north, south, west and east have managed to establish successful tourism ventures. This study also focuses on how they have managed to increase the opportunity of self-employment, financial autonomy, social capabilities and personal attitudes among rural women. The rural women have also achieved success in developing the non-agricultural related businesses in the rural areas of diverse parts of India.

Traditionally in Indian Tourism sector, women are generally associated with low paid and domestic jobs like house-keeping, catering etc. This study observes the efforts and capabilities of the rural women to establish themselves in the rural tourism industry and develop entrepreneurial activity instead of settling in stereo-type jobs like house-keeping.

Thus, the objective of the present study is

1. To gain insight into the concept of rural women entrepreneurship in tourism sector
2. To focus on the need for women entrepreneurs in tourism
3. To explore the barriers and difficulties experienced by rural women in establishing their Tourism businesses successfully
4. To examine the issues and challenges in the contemporary practices in tourism to make them beneficial for the rural communities and
5. To suggest measures for rural women entrepreneurship development through tourism sector.

The phenomenon of contemporary practices in tourism has been discussed in this paper with reference to four case studies of rural women entrepreneurs in tourism sector in different parts of India namely Himachal Pradesh in the north, Kerala in the south, Sikkim in the east and Rajasthan in the west.

Rural Women Entrepreneurship and Tourism in Himachal Pradesh

Kullu is a tourist destination known for its pristine nature, mild climate, clean air, unpolluted riverside and attractive farm lands. A large number of tourists throng this place to enjoy the recreational activities and the country side beauty. The women self-help groups of this village understood the significance of this place as a tourist destination and started making handicrafts and rural art products.

Women constitute ninety percent of weavers in Kullu valley. They work in well organized women weaving cooperative societies. These cooperative societies assist the rural women in coordinating their work, marketing and helping them earn more money. These women undertake all kinds of jobs in the cooperative society ranging from manager to sales person and earn Rs 5000 to Rs 10,000 per month. They make Pashmina shawls, mufflers, stoles of various designs which are renowned through the world and hence largely exported. They sell these in the Kulludussehera and numerous other rural fairs in the state. They also sell them to societies and showrooms in India. As Kullu is also a famous tourist destination, their handicrafts are also sold well to the tourists. These rural women learn the handicraft skill from the weaving society as well as from the family tradition inherited, nurtured and developed through years of practice.

This shawl making by the rural women is a recent addition to the tradition of Himachal Pradesh. Here the primary occupation for women is farming. And this is serving as a secondary source of income to many household rural women.

Rural Women Entrepreneurship and Tourism in Rajasthan

Rajasthan emerged as a prominent tourist destination in India after the Government gave it the tourism industry status in 1989. Rajasthan is known for eco-tourism, heritage tourism, pilgrimage tourism and wild life tourism. Rajasthan attracts tourists round the year.

Rural women in Rajasthan are mostly confined to household works. Female literacy rate is lowest in this state. In some villages the women are completely illiterate making their life miserable. With the development of Tourism sector in the state, the growth of the handicrafts industry started there by providing entrepreneurial opportunities to the rural women. The women entrepreneurs took various skill-based trainings in handicrafts.

In Shyampura village, the women entrepreneurs started a business called Arushi which is famous for its handicraft items like tie and dye, bags, cushion covers and bed-sheets. In Achrol village, rural women started an entrepreneurial venture called Sanskriti where quilts, bangles, terracotta items, block printing and jewellery items were made keeping in mind the tourist demand. They also started a training centre wherein the tourists can stay and learn the art and craft. This training centre concept gained huge popularity especially with the foreign tourists thereby providing huge income to the rural women entrepreneurs. Samode is another village in Rajasthan where the rural women formed as an entrepreneurial group undertaking the camel safari's for the tourists. These groups also provide Home stay facilities to the tourists. For this, the rural women took prior training. This is again generating huge income for the rural women entrepreneurs.

Rural Women Entrepreneurship in Tourism sector in Kerala

Kerala is one of the most popular tourist destinations in India. Kerala state is identified by the National Geographic Channel as a must-see place in India. It is also described as the "God's own country". The Economic Review has placed Kerala in the top 10 destinations under 'paradise found category'.

In Kerala, the rural women formed into self-help groups and took up rural accommodation for international tourists. They also serve the tourists with international as well as local food. This is providing good livelihood for the rural women. Some rural women groups in Kalliaserry panchayat took up solar drying wherein they dry seasonal fruits like mango, jack fruit and seasonal vegetables. These preserved fruits and vegetables are sold to the tourists. This gave them stable income. Some women groups who did not

have a start-up capital took micro credit loan and started food processing and seed growing businesses. These ventures provide them sustainable income.

Also Kerala is known for importing vegetables from other states at high prices. The rural women in Wayanad understood this problem, formed into self-help groups and started cultivating vegetables in small plots of land. Some women also took up roof-top cultivation of vegetables. These vegetables are sold to Tourist hotels for good profits. Thus, these rural women entrepreneurs are acting as suppliers in the tourism market. Rural women self-help groups in Kozhikode opened their farms to the tourists who are interested in experiencing the rural farm life and methods. These rural women also took prior training from the nearby town. They are earning good income from this activity.

The rural women in Kerala also provide home stay facilities to the tourists along with the local cuisine. They also encourage the tourists to participate in the daily activities of the rural women. This concept became very popular that it is implemented throughout the state thus providing good financial backing for the rural women. The rural women in Kalady produce articles like mats, baskets, pickles, jams, jewellery etc. and sell them to the tourists. The rural women group in Kottayam developed herbal garden in one acre of land and sell these products to the Ayurvedic centres that cater services exclusively for the tourists.

Rural Women Entrepreneurship and Tourism in Sikkim

Sikkim situated in the east is known for her natural beauty with a wide variety of flora and fauna. This state has got great potential for tourism. The state is surrounded by forests and Himalayan region making it a favourite destination for eco-tourism and mountaineering. The tourist season here is from April to June and October.

In Sikkim, tourism is an important sector providing livelihood to the local people. Naturally it is an important source of empowerment of rural women. As far as direct employment is concerned, 30% of rural women are engaged in the tourism sector as against 70% of men. Tourism sector also provides indirect employment in hotels, restaurants.

Coming to the nature of jobs in tourism sector, 30% of women out of 100 are engaged as regular employees, 32% on master-roll basis, 42% in engineering cell, another 42% in ad-hoc, 54% in contract and ad-hoc combined, and the highest 75% out of 100 on contract basis. In the tourism sector rural women are seen in a noticeable position in the state.

Many rural women are engaged in entrepreneurial activities like handicrafts, handlooms, various household businesses, small and medium scale enterprises in the state. As the sales tax is less in this state, more tourists make purchases here thus providing good source of income for the rural women entrepreneurs. Home stays also provide study income for the rural women.

4. Findings from Case studies

Findings from the case study of Himachal Pradesh

Most of the rural women in Kullu valley are enjoying good status in the society because of their entrepreneurial activities. As Kullu is a famous tourist place, these rural women are able to sell their products well to the tourists. This resulted in making the rural women economically self-sufficient. They are able to increase their standard of living and contributing a lot to the family income. These rural women also learnt to take part in the decision making in their community and to assume leadership roles. The more tourism is gaining popularity the more it is bringing entrepreneurial development to the Kullu women.

The positive contribution of tourism to rural women empowerment in Kullu valley can be identified through poverty reduction and enhancement of women's status. However, these rural women are not able to start entrepreneurial ventures independently. They start the ventures under the cooperative societies and work mostly in groups.

Findings from the case study of Rajasthan

These rural women in Rajasthan preferably were working in groups, indicating their still existing backwardness. Normally, these rural women distribute the profits among the group and deposit some amount in the bank as savings. They also started learning networking.

Through their entrepreneurial activities arising out of tourism these rural women are able to achieve economic freedom. There is also a substantial increase in the female education in the state. And the most significant development is the increase in the female birth rate. The health condition of the rural women has improved. The domestic violence started reducing. The girl child marriages, which are very rampant in the state, also started reducing.

Findings from the case study of Kerala

The rural women in Kerala are better educated and so are able to take up entrepreneurial activities in diverse fields in tourism sector. These rural women in Kerala are good at social networking. Through self-help groups, these women share financial support and experiences and are able to navigate difficult business situations with marked success. But, here again the rural women are still not able to work independently as entrepreneurs and still now prefer to work in self- help groups.

Findings from the case study of Sikkim

The rural women both skilled and un-skilled are largely engaged in the tourism sector. The tourism industry is creating lot of entrepreneurial opportunities for the rural women both directly and indirectly. As per the survey conducted by the Tata Economic Consultancy Services, Sikkim tourism is expected to increase more in the future. With this the employment and entrepreneurial activities of rural women also increase. And the best part is, the rural women in Sikkim understood that tourism is an essential means of livelihood for them and started engaging themselves into it both directly and indirectly.

Need for Rural Women Entrepreneurship and Opportunities for Rural Women in Tourism Sector

Tourism is a sector which can contribute to the social, economic, cultural, educational i.e. overall development of a region. Tourism supports women in rural areas by providing immediate or indirect business openings without antagonistically influencing horticultural workforce.

Tourism helps in providing employment opportunities to the rural women who cannot out-migrate from the villages by developing the rural women entrepreneurial system. Also majority of activities in the rural tourism do not require advanced training for local women.

With least training required for skill development, rural women are capable of offering a varied range of services. Since tourism industry is majorly contributing for the economic development, it facilitates many forms of business development opportunities for rural women. Due to the Indian government efforts to develop rural tourism, increased opportunities for the employment of local rural women have originated. Tourism industry offers varied business and entrepreneurial opportunities for income generation for rural women. Rural females can grab multiple opportunities by way of training in cuisine preparation, craft making, hospitality management for the guests. Activities such as papad preparation, manufacturing and selling of pickle's, chalk creation, stationary production, designing the post cards and selling, shopping bags manufacturing, designing the imitation jewellery, embroidery on bags and clothes, mehndi designing, jam preparation on small scale and distribution etc. provide huge entrepreneurial opportunities to the rural women.

Rural Cuisine which is gaining popularity is providing huge entrepreneurial opportunities for rural women. Rural accommodation is also creating new business opportunities for the rural women.

Women's preference to work from home and desire for social recognition motivates them for self-employment. The trained women entrepreneurs can assume the responsibility of operation and maintenance of the tourism ventures at their villages. Since the women entrepreneurs have already been trained, it is suggested that the opportunity be pursued further.

The rural women entrepreneurs can thus generate employment opportunities for others while keeping pace with their personal, family and social life.

Issues and Challenges Experienced by Rural Women Entrepreneurs in Tourism Sector

The businesses started by the rural women entrepreneurs in tourism sector are small, unorganised with no competitive advantage. This is due to the lack of experience and necessary training of the rural women. Rural women are mainly concerned with earning decent profits and fail to understand the long term goals of their businesses. They are not in a position to expand their business due to the non-availability of skilled labour in rural areas. Also the poor infrastructural facilities in the rural areas add to their woes.

The following problems are faced by rural women entrepreneurs as per the ILO report:

Lack of Support- the rural women face the problem of lack of support both at home and at work place in the pursuit of business

Lack of capital – the women in villages generally neither lacks the capital to start the business nor do they know the procedure to procure a loan for their venture.

Lack of confidence and faith– these women tend to start their tourist ventures very timidly due to lack of guidance and confidence.

Lack of Education- Women starting as entrepreneurs does not have the required technical skills due to lack of education

Lack of Experience- the lack of previous experience for the rural women is resulting in running into business losses. Also the rural women are unable to expand their ventures due to the lack of experience. Also, the rural women entrepreneurs may be required to deal with difficult tasks as they aim to expand their business enterprise and the track needs to up-scaling themselves with improvisation mechanism like better service, more hospitality, good amount of capital for inventory, and good marketing techniques.

The rural women entrepreneurs may have fewer customers in the initial stages. Good business management practices are to be implemented for the success in the long run.

Lack of good communication is a common problem usually faced by these rural women. These rural women may not have the business flourishing especially during the rainy season. As the tourism industry is seasonal in nature, a rural person adds to their difficulties. They are not able to run their businesses cost effectively ultimately. Beforehand training is a must upon the start of their ventures. Incentives offered for the field work are low compared to the drudgery. Women entrepreneurs are finding it difficult to provide the incentives while keeping the costs low.

Measures for Rural Women Entrepreneurial Development through Tourism Sector

Firstly, the rural women should know about the various chances available in the tourism sector. Also the information regarding the emerging opportunities in the tourism sector suitable for rural women should be made known to them.

Secondly, required training should be given to these women before the start of their tourist ventures. During the training they should understand the hospitality procedure to be adopted towards their customers. They should also be trained in the communication skills.

Thirdly, as these women do not have the required capital to start the business, they should be guided with the procedures to procure the loans. They should be informed of the advantages to form and work in cooperatives to enable the easy procurement of capital.

Fourthly, the rural women should be guided with regard to marketing of their products. They should be made aware of creating business networks in this process.

Lastly, as these women lack the experience and confidence to run the business, they should be supported by the family throughout and by the society in the initial stages.

5. Conclusion

Rural women are integral to the tourism sector in rural areas since they can play significant role in carrying on the ventures and managing the resources. In turn their participation is very crucial in the development of the rural tourism sector. They have the prospective to contribute to the promotion of the tourism sector in terms of their indigenous knowledge and skills relating to providing efficient services.

Thus, these case studies have been an effective tool to gain insight into the concept of rural women entrepreneurship in tourism sector focusing on to study the need of women entrepreneurs and their opportunities in tourism, barriers and difficulties experienced by rural women and to suggest measures for women empowerment from tourism.

These case studies also helped in studying the valuable influence of tourism on the rural women. The rural women entrepreneurs in tourism sector are able to enhance their capabilities because of their better financial position. Their prestige and status in the society has improved and hence are motivated to undertake new training courses. Tourism sector has positively impacted the self-perceptions of the rural women that they can now undertake new business opportunities.

Also, this study shows how the rural women in the four diverse parts in India i.e. the north, south, east and west have managed to establish successful tourism ventures and how they have managed to increase the opportunity of self-employment, economic independence, personal and social capabilities among rural women

The rural women's self-employment activities not only can improve their own lives and family but also contribute to the development of that rural area. The quality of life of the rural women has been improved along with regional development.

The overall goal of this paper is to study the rural women managed tourism enterprises in different parts of India i.e. Kullu in the north, Kerala in the south, Sikkim in the east and Rajasthan in the west that resulted in strengthening the livelihoods of the rural women and for the preservation and development of local heritage of the villages.

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