

FROM FRAME TO FAME: FEMINISM IN TOURISM

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Abstract: Women play a noteworthy role in the arena of Tourism. Tourism is characterized by consumerism where the visual images of women coherently divulge as the producer and consumer of the tourism product. Consumption of this product yields a phenomenal gain in the progress of the destination and to the gender in return. Though tourism cannot be classified as a 'gender-based industry', the involvement and empowerment of the women in Tourism has brought in arguable difference amongst researchers from the view point of the tourists. The spectrum of 'women as an image' has spread to an array of fields like community development, entrepreneurship, hoteliering, travel business and so on. This research paper critically analyses the variegated image of women in tourism industry and argues that women have occupied an indispensable monarchy in the premise of Tourism.

Keywords: Images, Role, Tourism, Women

Introduction: *"Globally women are accruing a greater share of wealth and exercising more economic power and more importantly, they are travelling"*[1]

Gender is connected with Tourism as a trade and as an experience [2]. Tourism is an exciting phenomenon that results from travel. Travel gained impetus from the time Summerians (Babylonia) invented money and development of trade around 4000 BC [3]. After the World War II, Tourism has grown leaps and bounds and is classified as an Industry that fetches economic growth for a Nation [4]. At this juncture, the role of gender diaspora in tourism unveils in-depth scope for research. In the earlier researches man was always projected as the traveller and the lady was showcased as hostess [5]. But globalization brought in many a change in the role played by both the gender. Tourism as an Industry is being fully explored by the women and their presence is felt at every point. In fact, their presence is mandatory to strike a balance in the Industry. This paper brings out the role played by the women gender in the field of tourism and thus emerges with a nascent theme of showcasing tourism as a more of feministic in nature.

Women and Imagery : Moving further, it is identified that Women exhibit three significant images in Tourism where their connectivity is quintessential. In a way, women find their space in this demanding business called Tourism. The nature of Tourism calls for an arduous travel and tiresome shuttles, representing predominantly the male community. More than a woman, a man is always portrayed as a business traveller or an entrepreneur or as a tourist. This model mentioned above put-forwards an acceptable image on the women gender and their contribution in Tourism, which will be discussed in the following section.

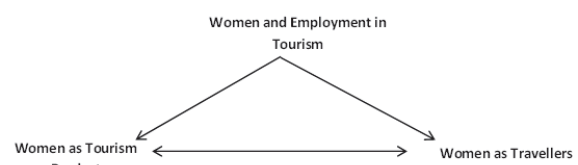


Fig. 1. The triangulation model

Women as a Product

A product in Tourism is said to attract and involve tourists. While the landscapes, ethnicity, cuisine, culture and so forth are products of tourism, classifying women as a product may be a dubious one. Many researchers have acknowledged women as a product based on their identity. Women in India have always been an attraction for people of the alien lands. For instance, the authenticity of a Kashmiri woman lies in her traditional wear. Her image as a tradition speaks volume about the place, prosperity, values, heritage and culture at large. This further involves the tourists in knowing the means and method of livelihood of the woman, the art and handicrafts that the women are engaged in, their participation in tourism and so forth.

Fig. 2, represents a Kashmiri woman in her traditional wear. The image represents an overall background of the place too. A confident, independent Kashmiri woman amidst serene, fertile, quaint water bodies is projected in the image. This visual image as a product impacts the tourists to visit the place and further generates revenue for the local produce of the women folk.



Fig 2. A Kashmiri woman – showcased as a tourism product

Women as Travellers : In spite of a drastic change in the business culture of travel, the image of travellers has always been attributed towards men [6]. Even in the 18th and 19th centuries, travellers who were ‘adventurers’ and ‘explorers’ were attributed only to men [7]. In the mid-1800s, there had been phenomenal change in the travel pattern of the women though they had struggles from the society in depriving their rights to travel or write about the Travel experiences [8]. Gradually with the ascent of education, technology and economy, a progress in women taking travel was felt. Waters opines that women outnumber men in travel in the leisure market [9]. Due to the articulate travel pattern of women, they are considered as an influential market segment in the premise of the Tourism industry [10]. This has led to the creation of tailor made products in the hotels like ladies floor, single-lady guest rooms, and lady butlers for personalised services [11]. The reflection here is the corporate image of a woman who is solo, independent, confident, adventurous, business oriented and demanding. In other words, business tourism has crept into the travel pattern of the travelling women. It could thus be argued that women as a traveller contributes a variety of aspects to tourism, herself being an entity in tourism.

Women and employment in Tourism : Ferguson notes that Tourism is a highly gendered oriented industry where women are employed in a lower level with minimum wages as that of the men [12]. But, the present day picture projects a better image about the positions occupied by the women. For instance, all five star rated hotels in Chennai, India have around 40% of women employees across all the levels [13]. They are constantly encouraged to continue with their services and not to give up [14]. They are happy, secured and motivated to give their best to the

organisation [15]. Structured training programmes, regular counselling, prompt handling of grievances, congenial work environment have tangled the women folk with the Industry [16]. Women are also employed in the associate level and are given due esteem and reputation.

Women in Tourism have reached great heights in their career. Priya Paul, Owner of The Park group of hotels, India is an apt precedence. She started her career at the age of 22 and she now manages 6 luxury hotels of high repute. She is also referred to as ‘The First Lady of Boutique in India’ [17]. Gender never stopped her from facing oddities and moving further. Her dedication and determination to the field has brought in a phenomenal change in the minds of the women gender of the tourism and hotel fraternity [18].



Fig 2. Priya Paul, Owner, The Park Hotels receiving Padma Sri award in 2012, from Smt. Pratiba Patil, Former President of India

Conclusion : The above paper has carefully presented the nuances of women gender in the tourism sector. This very nature and presence of women makes the tourism industry a more feministic one. The role adopted by the women in tourism calls for immediate action and implementation of several guidelines to facilitate a woman-friendly tourism activity in the country which are - Tourism and hospitality policies and procedures should insist on women empowerment, awareness on the importance of women in tourism should be created at large, Government and travel agents should work out a subsidised familiarization trips to tourism destinations that feature women artisans, women entrepreneurs and women leaders which forms the basis for women’s tourism product, Stakeholders and Government should foster loan assistance for female-friendly business practices and adequate training on skill development for women should be offered.

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