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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH TOURISM INDUSTRY IN SIKKIM STATE, INDIA

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#### ABSTRACT

Women empowerment is one major issue of today's. Various International organisations, and governments, are engaged for empowering women, economically, socially, and politically. United Nation World Travel Organisation implemented an action plan for empowering women through tourism. As far as Sikkim state is concerned, tourism is one of the main sectors in the state and contributing to income and employment to people. In this context, the present study examines the contributions of tourism in women's empowerment in Sikkim. The study is based on secondary data. A statistical test shows there is a difference in participation of male and female work-force in tourism in the state. Out of the total workforce in tourism, only 30 percent of the workforce is female, which is less than that of the average female workforce of the state (34 percent). Further, there is a wide scope for the women's empowerment through tourism in Sikkim. The steps should be taken by the government, banks, NGOs, Self-Help Groups, and so on to encourage and facilitate women in tourism-related activities.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Empowerment of women is one of the important issues in the last decade of the twentieth century. Women's economic empowerment is absolutely essential for raising their status in society. Visits to several hundred villages spread throughout the country and large-scale interactions with rural and urban women and questioning them about their needs always elicited the same answer: 'give us jobs- we can do the rest' (Mira Seth, 2001). Tourism is found to be an important means of empowering women in this present global economy. Because of the relative 'newness' of mass tourism, many new employment opportunities exist for women, both within the formal and informal sectors (Sharma, 2004). However, less attention has been paid to the unequal ways in which the benefits of tourism are distributed between men and women, particularly in the developing world. Tourism presents both opportunities and challenges for gender equality and women's empowerment. The Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010 is a first attempt to develop a quantitative framework for monitoring the status of women working in tourism across the globe. Its focus is on tourism in developing regions (Global Report on Women in Tourism, 2010). As far as the Sikkim tourism is concerned, the women are actively involved. They are getting equal opportunities for jobs, both direct and indirect employment through tourism in Sikkim. Tourism is one of the important sectors in Sikkim state. It is providing livelihood to the local people in and around the tourists' destinations. It is a major means of income and employment for people today.

Joshi, and Dhyani (2009) stated that "tourism development in any area invariably leads to economic growth of that area, which is manifested in terms of increase in income and employment opportunities, infrastructural growth, improvement in the standard of living, etc." Travels and tourism's contribution to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment growth; directly, indirectly and in induced form is significant (Mittal and Goel, 2012). Tourism sector industries have been generating a large number of highly diversified jobs in the different branches of activities such as hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, tour operators, leisure activities and passenger transport (Basu, 2012). Sikkim is providing more than 45000 direct employments to the state and more than 15000 direct employment to youths. It includes employment to all categories and all the sections of the society, i.e. skilled and unskilled, men and women etc. From government service to other indirect employment through tourism-related activities like small and medium enterprises, wayside amenities, hotels, handlooms and handicraft etc, women are engaged/involved. But the total participation of women in the tourism industry is yet to be studied, in depth. As per the total participation of workforce in the tourism and also as per the actual potential of the industry, what is the total participation of female workforce in tourism in the state? In this context, the present study examines the contribution of tourism industry in women's empowerment in Sikkim state.

#### OBJECTIVES

- To probe into the role of the tourism industry in the empowerment of women.
- To examine the participation of women in the tourism industry in Sikkim state.

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## HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis for the present study has been framed as;

### *Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):*

“There is a no significant difference in the participation of male and female workforce in the tourism industry in Sikkim state”.

### *Alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):*

“There is significant difference in the participation of male and female work-force in tourism industry in Sikkim state”.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### *Data and sources*

The present study is conducted on the tourism industry and its contribution on women's empowerment in Sikkim state. The study is based on secondary data. Secondary data have been collected from the Civil Aviation and Tourism Department, Government of Sikkim. Only the data of total number of employee in Head Office of Tourism Department of Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, have been taken to examine the participation of women in the tourism industry. The results thus obtained were used to draw inferences for the total state. The period of the present study is 2011-2012.

### *Statistical tools used*

Simple statistics like simple average and percentage of employment has been used in the present study to study examine the contribution of tourism industry in women's empowerment. The total percentage share of employment, gender wise, has been used to highlight the present status of women's employment within the tourism in state. Further, Karl Pearson correlation has been applied in the present study to test the framed hypothesis. In-addition, objective analysis has been made to study the role of tourism for empowerment of women. Therefore, the present study is analytical and explanatory in nature.

### *Delimitations of the study*

The present paper is delimited to the study of empowerment of women through tourism industry in Sikkim state. Only the direct employment within the tourism industry is analysed in the present study.

## TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

To find out the significant difference between the male and female participation in tourism industry in Sikkim state, the Karl Pearson Correlation ( $r$ ) has been applied. As per the statistical test, Karl Pearson Correlation ( $r$ ) = .981,  $p$ -value = .003. It indicates that, the statistical test is significant at the 0.05 level, where  $P$ -value is less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) of no significant difference between male and female participation in tourism industry in Sikkim is rejected, and accept Alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) of “there is significant difference in the male and female participation in tourism industry in Sikkim state”. From the above it is concluded that, the number of female workforce or their

participation in tourism sector is not equal to that of male participation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Discussion on Tourism sector in Sikkim state*

Tourism is identified as one of the most important industry in the Sikkim state with a potential of further growth. Sikkim is one of the Himalayan states, covered with three international boundaries of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)- China from North, Bhutan from East, and Nepal from West and National boundary of West Bengal from South. The total area of Sikkim is 7096 sq/km out of which more than 45 percent of the total land is covered by forest. Sikkim is the 26<sup>th</sup> bio-diversity hot spot of the world and posses a unique combination of all species including varieties of flora and fauna. Natural beauties of Sikkim make her as one of the growing tourism destination in India. Since it is rich in natural beauty, forest and Himalayan region favourable for mountaineering and various other activities, it is an Eco-tourism destination and attracting more tourists over a period of time. The inflow of tourist in Sikkim has increased from 152997 in the year 2000 to 720768 in the year 2010 with an average annual percentage growth rate of 33 percent. Tourism is dominated by domestic tourist, which account for 95 percent of arrival against 5 percent of foreign tourists arrival annually in Sikkim. Tourist arrival is again seasonal in nature. Tourist arrivals into the state are seasonal and tend to cluster around April- June and October, as these are the ‘holiday season’ months in West Bengal, the sources of the overwhelming majority of tourists. Efforts of tourism department to stretch the tourists' season beyond these months have had some success, as tourist visits are spread almost continuously from March to October, barring the monsoon months of July – August (Lama, 2008). Tourism has wider economic impacts on economy of Sikkim state. The inflow of more tourists in Sikkim is providing income and employment opportunities to the local people in and around tourism destinations.

### *Discussion on status of women in Sikkim state*

According to the 2001 Census of India, out of the total population of Sikkim, i.e. 540,493, women constitute of 46.75 percent. In Sikkim, women shares about 30.41 percent of total workforce and more than 92 percent of total female population lives in rural areas. Out of the total workforce 30.41 percent is female employee against 69.59 percent of male employee. The role of women's empowerment for a just society was highlighted in the Beijing Conference (1995). Sikkim has a tradition of collective decision making by communities through the institution of ‘Dzumsa’ (Lama, 2001). There is a reserve for women in the state. The reservation of seats for women in Panchayat is 40 percent and 30 percent in the Government service. Both the Central and State governments have introduced a number of programme, e.g. Mahila Samridhhi Yojana, Balika Samridhhi Yojana and Small Family Schemes, to promote both women's welfare and their empowerment. Gender concerns have been addressed in the state through an array of women-specific welfare and empowerment programmes (Government of Sikkim, 1998). However in the absence of either a comprehensive study on gender related

issues in Sikkim or any other audit of the development programmes of the state government, it is difficult to make a correct assessment of the situation of women. In order to mainstream gender concerns into the core of development planning and action, public debate on gender issues needs to be encouraged, with the involvement of media, NGO's, researchers and social activists, along with the government and international development partners (Lama, 2001).

### **Discussion Role of tourism sector in women's empowerment**

The year 2001 has been declared as the "International Women's Empowerment Year" by the United Nations. Again the year 2001 has been declared as the "Women's Empowerment Year" in India. During the last sixties, the concept of empowerment became very important in the field of development studies. Empowerment has different meaning in the development field, in general, it implies the equal distribution of power between those who have more power and who have less power. Tourism Sector is a major generator of employment. As a highly labour intensive activity, tourism and tourism support activities create a high proportion of employment and career opportunities for low skilled and semi-skilled workers, particularly for poor, female and young workers. Women make up 70 percent of the labour force in tourism sector and half of all tourism workers are 25 years or under. The tourism sector can be an important source of employment for many of the unemployed youth and consequently reduces the poverty in the society (Government of India, 2011). During a conference in Berlin in March 2008 the United Nations World Travel Organization (UNWTO) has implemented an Action Plan for the Empowerment of Women through Tourism sector. The objectives of the plan are derived from the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, which aims are to benefit poor (also through tourism), protect the environment and empower women. Tourism is an important part of world's GDP (more than 10percent) and creates around 8 percent of world's employment. Of all people employed in the tourism sector 60-70 percent are women (Ampumuza *et al*, 2008).

Despite the bias against the service industry during socialism, jobs in tourism were always attractive and respected within society, because, given the circumstances, economic sectors like tourism were able to employ large percentages of women and paid relatively high wages. Thus, tourism seems to be a valuable tool for promoting women's economic and social well-being. Tourism workers benefited from professional training courses and long holidays in the off-season (Ampumuza *et al*, 2008). In addition, seasonal unemployment made tourism an attractive opportunity for women who could combine paid employment with family responsibilities, thus easing their triple burden (Ghodsee, 2003). Introducing the notion of generative empowerment into the transformation and sustainability debate can better contextualize the role of tourism in sustainable development in post-communist CEE (Hall, 2000). This traditional division is even stronger visible in small scale tourism and micro enterprises. Small scale tourism is important within the tourism sector in Latin-America, especially in rural areas. For example in Ecuador 54, 5 percent of the tourist entrepreneurs are micro enterprises (Andrade and Navarro, 2005). As we look on the percentage share of women employment through tourism in most of the

tourism related economy of the world, the contribution of tourism industry in women empowerment can well judged. Table-1 shows the percentage share of women's employment in some major tourism economy of the world.

**Table 1. Percentage share of women employment in Tourism Industry**

S. No.	Country	Employment (%)
1	Australia	55.8
2	Canada	55
3	Dominican Republic	50
4	Mexico	47
5	Egypt	25

Sources: The Fifth UNWTO International Conference on Tourism Statistics, 2009.

In Australia, the tourism sector has 55.8 percent of female employment, which is relatively higher as compared to other tourism economy, like Canada-55 percent, Dominican Republic- 50 percent, Mexico- 47 percent and Egypt – 25 percent, whereas, in India, the female participation in tourism sector is approximately around 30 percent. As per the region, the participation of women in Hotel and Restaurant is as in the Table-2.

**Table 2. Percentage share of women employment in Hotel and Restaurant (%)**

Sl. No.	Region	Employment (%)
1	Latin America	58.5
2	Caribbean	55.4
3	Africa	47
4	Oceania	46.8
5	Asia	35.4

Sources: Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010, 2011.

Table-2 shows the participation of women in hotel and restaurant. The participation of women in Hotel and restaurant business is an average of 49 percent. It is high in region of Latin America with 58.5 percent and lowest in Asia with 35.4 percent which is more than the average female participation in tourism sector in India.

### **Discussion on Women's empowerment through tourism industry in Sikkim state**

Empowerment of women through the tourism industry is an important field of concern today. As far as Sikkim state is concerned, tourism is one of an important sectors in Sikkim state and providing livelihood to the local people in and around the various tourists' destinations. It is a major means of income and employment for people. It offers employment to all categories and all the section of the society, i.e., skilled and unskilled, men and women etc. Therefore, it is one of the important sources of women's empowerment in the state.

**Table 3. Percentage share of employment in tourism in Sikkim**

S. No.	Gender	Employment (%)
1	Male	69.59
2	Female	30.41
	Total	100

Sources: Census 2001, Government of India.

As per the study conducted on women's empowerment through tourism industry in Sikkim, 34 percent of female population are directly linked with the tourism industry in state (table 3). Out of the total direct employment through tourism, 34 percent of the employees are female against 66 percent of male employee which is higher than the average percentage share of total

female workforce of 30 percent in the state (Census 2001). In Sikkim, tourism industry is contributing much to the women's empowerment. They are getting equal opportunities in tourism and tourism related sectors. Women, both skilled and unskilled, are actively involved in the tourism sector and its decision making.



Fig. 1. Women participation in Decision making in Sikkim Tourism

In Fig-1 Secretary of tourism and civil aviation department Mrs. Nim Ethenpa, along with joint secretary, assistant engineer, Junior Engineer (Tourism Department), chief engineer, department of Transport Mr. Uttam Pradhan, officer from Irrigation Department and Sub Divisional Magistrate Mrs. Roshni Rai visiting the sight.



Fig. 2. Women participation in tourism related business in Sikkim state

In Fig-2 Girl is explaining to the tourists about the package tour for sightseeing and the interesting places to visit within Sikkim.

Table 4. Women employment in tourism sector as per the nature of job

S. No.	Nature of Job	Employment (%)	
		Male	Female
1	Regular Employee	69.67	30.32
2	Regular- Master Roll basis	67.5	32.5
3	Engineering Cell	57.69	42.30
4	Ad-hoc basis and Contract basis		
	Ad-hoc	57.14	42.85
	Contract	25	75
	Combined	45.45	54.54
	Total	66	34

Sources: Computed from the secondary data

Table-4 shows the employment as per the nature of job in the tourism department of Sikkim. In regular basis, there is 30.32

percent of female employee against 69.67 percent of male employee. In engineering cell of the tourism department, total female employee is 42.30 percent and 57.69 percent male employee. In regular Master Roll basis, there is 32.5 percent female employee and 67.5 percent male employee. On Ad-hoc and contract basis, there is 54.54 percent of female employee against 45.45 percent of male employee. In Ad-hoc and contract basis, the percentage share of female employment is more followed by the total percentage of women employment in engineering cell as compare to other nature of job. In contract basis, particularly, the percentage of female employment is 75 percent against 25 percent of male employment. Apart from direct involvement of women population in tourism activities, good numbers of women are indirectly engaged in tourism industry. In indirect way, tourism related activities like in hotels, restaurants, cafeterias, Small and medium enterprises (SME's), various household businesses, tea stalls, travels, handlooms and handicraft etc., women are engaged and have occupied a noticeable position in the state. Even in seasonal homes (home-stays), the participation is noticed and seems to be an appropriate livelihood activity within tourism for women, especially in South-West district.

### Conclusion

Tourism industry is one of an important source for empowering women. In Sikkim, tourism industry is contributing much in the women's empowerment. Women in Sikkim, both skilled and unskilled, are actively involved in the tourism sector and its decision making. The economic empowerment of women through tourism can be well judged by the percentage share of women workforce in tourism in Sikkim. The total percentage share of women employee in tourism sector is 34 percentages, which is higher than the total percentage of women workforce of 30 percent in the state. The total percentage women employee in tourism sector of Sikkim is also more than that of India's total women participation, i.e., 30 percent. As per the nature of job, the percentage share of women population is more in Ad-hoc and contract basis and next in the engineering cell. It is 54.54 percent in Ad-hoc and contract basis, 42.30 percent in engineering cell, 32.5 percent in regular Master Roll basis and 30.32 percent in regular basis as officers and staffs. Apart from direct employment through tourism, women are also indirectly engaged in tourism related activities. In indirect way, tourism related activities like in hotels, restaurants, cafeterias, Small and medium enterprises (SME's), various household businesses, tea stalls, travels, handlooms and handicraft etc., they are employed and have occupied a noticeable position in the state. Even in seasonal homes (home-stays), the participation is noticeable.

Sikkim is gifted with natural beauty and resources, therefore, there is a further potential in the tourism industry. And also as per the forecast study conducted by Tata Economic Consultancy Services (TECS), Horizon study and various others researcher, Sikkim tourism is expected to expand more in the future. With the increasing inflows of more tourists the employment opportunity will also increase. Hence, there are more possibilities for empowerment of women and that too at a very low investment in tourism industry. Tourism is a service oriented, labour intensive and multi-dimensional sector which is linked with many other sectors of the economy like

transportation, hotels, restaurants, travels and tour businesses, seasonal home (home stay), etc. and provide a larger opportunity for employment. Therefore, there is wide scope for women's empowerment in both formal and informal sectors of tourism industry.

### Suggestion

The systematic approach is required to uplift the women section of society through tourism industry, so that the management, records and future research is possible in this particular field. It is in this context, the steps should be taken for the involvement and participation of women in this sector. We can encourage them by providing the some tourism related activities and business in particular for females like, hotels, way side amenities, model tea houses, trainings in travels, and providing Seasonal home business (Home-stays) for them/ or in the name of women of the home, and licensing of cafeterias for women. Apart from these, the tourism related workshops, seminars, conferences and exhibitions should be organized, in particular for women, within state and later for inter-state. Later inter-state exhibitions will not only help to encourage women in tourism sector but also increase the tourist inflows along with advertisement or promotion tourism of the state. Further, It is not only the duty of government and along with government, but also it is the duty of individual, institutions, organisation (both profitable and non-profitable), SHG's, SMEs, Micro Financial institutes, banks and all other stakeholders of tourism to facilitate and encourage women to take participation in tourism related activities. In this regard, the "Hands-on Approach" should be followed. Finally, it may be emphasized that, the women themselves have to come forward and make it as a major and alternative means of livelihood in the state.

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