



PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN ECO-TOURISM

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INTRODUCTION

The transition from homemaker to sophisticated businesswoman is not that easy. But the trend is changing. Women are coming forth to the business arena with ideas to start small and medium enterprises. The role of women entrepreneurs is especially relevant in the situation of large scale unemployment that the country faces. Mostly, the women entrepreneurs are engaged in home-made articles such as candle making, handicrafts, handloom (weaving) textiles, pickles, masala powder, agarbati, pappad, tailoring, pottery, petty shops, tiffin center, snack bars, street vending (vegetables, flowers, fruits, etc.), packaging materials, milk items such as curd, butter milk, ghee, etc.

Unlike running other industries, tourism is recognized as the most promising industry globally, which possesses tremendous capacity for growth and revenue generation. This industry has made inroad into the mainstream of the economy quietly but firmly. Eco-Tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of Tourism today. More and more destinations are becoming interested in green Tourism and Eco-Tourism is "any Tourism taking place in a natural environment." Not much attention has been given to research about women empowerment through tourism yet. Hence, this paper is an attempt to outline the eco-tourism enterprises as an entrepreneurial option for women.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are

- i. To investigate the issues and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in tourism industry.
- ii. To summarize the findings based on the analysis and interpretations of the study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Campbell et al.(1994) studied the effects of family life on women's job performance and work attitudes. The result revealed that women with children were significantly lower in occupational commitment when compared to women without children; contrary to expectation, women with younger children outperformed women with older children.

Wearing and Larsen (1996) are positive about the potential of ecotourism to promote community development, stating that ecotourism can empower local communities by giving them a sense of pride in and awareness of the importance of their natural resources and control over their own development. In many cases women have a close connection with the physical environment of their community and thus involve in the development of tourism industry.

Van der Cammen (1997) states that empowerment is a process to enable women to achieve goal in life such as earning more income on their own to cope with growing

needs for income, health-care and education for their children. Women empowerment has become more important now, as it has gained political importance since being acknowledged by the United Nation World Tourism Organization. (UNWTO)

Equations (2007, p3) in its report on the global data on the number of women and men working in tourism related professions suggest that the organized tourism sector is a particularly important sector where 46 % of the workforce is women (in general 30-40% of the workforce is women. Most experts agree that data on the percentage of women in the tourism workforce are incomplete but it can still be seen that in developing nations women constitute a large percentage of tourism workers and it is also seen that there is greater prospective for women to find positions of responsibility in the tourism sector than in most other sectors of the economy.

METHODOLOGY

Primary data were collected from the respondents in tirunelveli, tutucorin and kanyakumari district as samples. A convenience sample was used, by means of a snowball sampling technique, to identify women-owned businesses that could participate in this study. Well-known women-owned businesses in these regions also acted as informants and identified other potential women-owned businesses for inclusion in the sample. The collected data is analyzed with the help of percentages and ranking technique. The relevant secondary data were collected from various books, journals, magazines, net, etc.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

A detailed study regarding profile of women entrepreneurs involved in eco-tourism has been made.

Table No. 1
Age of the Respondents

Sl. No	Age(in years)	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	16-25	2	7.14
2.	26-35	8	28.57
3.	36-45	15	53.57
4.	Above 45	3	10.71
	Total	28	100

The above table shows that a maximum of 53.57 percent of the respondents are in the age group of 36-45 years, 28.57 percent of the respondents belong to 26-35 years,

10.71 percent are above 45 years and only 10.71 percent are in the 16-25 years age group.

Table No. 2
Marital Status of the respondents

Sl. No	Marital status	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Single	6	21.43
2.	Married	22	78.57
	Total	28	100

It is clear that the highest percentage of the respondents (78.57%) is married. Only 21.43 percent of the respondents are single.

Table No. 3
Educational level of the respondents

Sl. No	Educational level	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Primary education	3	10.71
2.	Secondary education	12	42.87
3.	Higher Secondary Education	8	28.57
4.	Degree or Diploma	5	17.86
	Total	28	100

It is apparent that a high percentage (42.87%) of the respondents have secondary education followed by 28.57 percent respondents have higher secondary

education, 17.85 percent of them are degree/diploma holders and only 10.71 percent of the respondents have primary education.

Table No. 4
Monthly Income of the respondents

Sl. No	Monthly Income(in Rs)	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than 10,000	8	28.57
2.	10,000 – 20,000	12	42.87
3.	20,001 – 30,000	5	17.86
4.	Above 30,000	3	10.71
	Total	28	100

A maximum of 42.87 percent of the respondents earn Rs.10,000 to 20,000 followed by 28.57 percent of them earn less than Rs.10,000, 17.86 percent earn Rs.20,001 to 30,000 and only 10.71 percent of the respondents earn above Rs.30,000.

Table No. 5
Problems of the respondents

Sl. No	Problems	I	II	III	IV	Score	Rank
1.	Finance	4	5	11	8	2.17	III
2.	Personal	9	10	5	4	3.04	I
3.	Societal	5	5	7	11	2.14	IV
4.	Enterprise	10	8	5	5	2.82	II

The above table exhibit the problems experienced by women entrepreneurs in tourism industry. The respondents identified those problems in order of importance, weights are assigned namely 4,3,2 & 1. A close look of the analysis reveals that most of the respondents suffer from personal problems and it takes first rank followed by enterprise, finance and societal problems based on the scores.

FINDINGS

- A maximum of 53.57 percent of the respondents are in the age group of 36-45 years
- It is clear that the highest percentage of the respondents (78.57%) is married.
- It is apparent that a high percentage (42.87%) of the respondents has secondary education.
- A maximum of 42.87 percent of the respondents earn Rs.10,000 to 20,000.
- Most of the women entrepreneurs in tourism industry suffer due to personal problems.

CONCLUSION

Developing women’s entrepreneurship in the rural areas is thus a challenging task. There are many hurdles and problems that are faced by women entrepreneurs. Domestic difficulties such as balancing a woman’s role in the home and the enterprise expectations also featured as major challenges facing these women. Any entrepreneurship also involves some level of risk taking. The reality of the role that they desire to play is hindered by the economic and social conditions that limit their participation and growth and confine them to their homes. To overcome these problems, they should fight against the problems that hinders them from achieving. And should focus on not just self development but also

the development of the community and the nation as a whole.

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