

The influence of tourism development on economic Empowerment of rural women

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Abstract

Among the production's elements for economic growth and development such as natural resources and physical wealth, capital, technology and management, human resource is an important factor. This study aims at identifying the effects of tourism on women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship of rural women in rural tourism in Iran. The study was conducted on women and girls in rural areas of the province of East Azarbaijan, located in the north-west of Iran. The data has been collected by field work including questioner and interview. The data had been collected from 210 rural female those were living in two villages, which one of them is tourism destination and another had no attraction for tourists. The research finding specifies that the Tourism destination village has the highest percentage of employment in industry and services, while in the other village; the majority of rural female labor force is concentrated in agriculture. Also, the research indicates that there are significant differences among female economic empowerment in two villages and in all characteristics related to the economic empowerment, such as Risks, Creativity, Tolerance of Uncertainty and Innovation, participants in Tourism Destination village gain higher means. Therefore, it indicates that tourism development in Tourism Destination village positively has been affected on female economic empowerment.

Keywords: Women's empowerment, Rural tourism, Tourism effects, Economic effects, Rural entrepreneurship, Iran

Introduction

Obviously, the role of human capital has been a central part of the development strategies of most countries. One of the integral part of the development process of the world, in the past two decades is the significant changes to reduce gender inequalities. To achieve this goal, women should be more involved in family and society decision making and planning, The rationale for this focus was derived from a growing body of evidence that suggests that, along with education, women's employment appeared to have a positive impact on growth as well as to help to translate economic growth into greater gender equality variously defined. (Kabeer, 2012: 50). The view that the promotion of gender equality may accelerate development is widely shared, If true, empowering women is not only about slicing the pie differently, but also about increasing the size of the pie to be distributed (Centre for Economic and Business Research, 2008: 5). On the other hand, full and productive employment and decent work for women were considered as a base of empowerment and reducing extreme poverty.

Empowerment is defined as a critical aspect of gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. As Kabeer (2005) described in her article , empowerment is a process, which leads towards a state in which women are empowered. That is, empowerment involves an improvement in women's ability to manage their own lives.

A critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances and giving women more autonomy to manage their own lives (Ateljevic, 2008 : 3-4) Women's empowerment is vital to sustainable development and the realization of human right for all. While it can be seen that definitions of women's empowerment have, from the outset, encompassed an economic dimension, this dimension has become increasingly visible within the international policy discourse in recent years. The Millennium Development Goals on gender equality and women's empowerment adopted an increase in women's share of non-agricultural employment as one of its indicators of women's empowerment (Ateljevic et.al. 2008:11) This is obtained through increased access to key resources and activities, as stressed by Duflo (2008) "gender empowerment [is] defined as improving the ability of women to access the constituents of development – in particular health, education, earnings opportunities, rights, and political participation." Given the dominance of economic thinking within the World Bank, it is not surprising it was one of the first agencies to explicitly adopt the language of women's economic empowerment: 'Economic empowerment is about making markets work for women (at the policy level) and empowering women to compete in markets (at the agency level)' (World Bank 2007: p.4). Tourism is a tool to empower women from various aspects. Tourism could assist women to increase power and control over natural resources; economic empowerment; educational empowerment and political empowerment. According to the 2013 census, the population of Iran was 77. 45 million (31. 5 % lived in rural areas and 68. 5% lived in urban areas.). It makes rural development as a serious tool to promote national development (Dadvar-Khani and Chobchian ,2015). In order to improve women's conditions in rural areas, the research emphasizes on the importance of defining the infrastructure which might prevent or facilitate economic empowerment. In the recent years, tourism has been strongly accorded as a resource for sustainable development in rural areas of Iran. Also tourism has contributed to the vitality of communities in many ways, such as festivals, fairs and local events, In Iran as other countries many jobs has been created by tourism and it has accelerated economic empowerment of rural communities. It assumes that tourism may have an effect on rural women life in two types , first it creates new job opportunities for them and secondly it changes the traditional patriarchal space in rural area that it may benefits women .

It has been over one decade that empowerment has been addressed in Iran. During this time, new approaches to empower the women in the rural areas had been adopted through development programs .This article is trying to analysis the economic effect of tourism development on empowering of women in rural areas of Osko township in North – West of Iran . This article looks at the relationship between Tourism development process and empowerment in selected villages in Iran. Based on a study of two villages, an effort has been made to look at the role of tourism in empowering rural females. These villages with the almost same geographical and demographical characteristic have different features in tourism attractions . So one of them is considering as a tourism site and the other is a non-tourism village.

Research questions

1. Are there differences in empowerment levels between the two groups within these different realms?
2. What are the differences between two villages regarding characteristics of economic empowerment of rural female?
3. In the tourism target village, how new tourism job opportunities effects on empowerment of rural female?
4. Are there certain realms in which either group has particularly high or low levels of empowerment?

Gender, Work and Tourism

The structure of society is the most important factor in the redefinition of a place. In modern geography, environmental, economic, social, and location phenomenon make up specific unique areas, in which place, person, time, and conscious action could constitute a unity of the place (Dadvar-Khani ,2015:3). The tourism industry represents a huge economic factor and its environmental and social impacts are obvious and have been well documented. In addition, integrating gender perspectives into the discussion of tourism is particularly important as the tourism industry is one major employer of women, offers various opportunities for independent income generating activities, and at the same time affects women's lives in destination communities.

The general picture suggests that the tourism industry seems to be a particularly important sector for women (46 % of the workforce are women) as their percentages of employment in most countries are higher than in the workforce in general (34 - 40 % are women, ILO data).In rural areas worldwide, tourism growth represents a potential solution to the decline of traditional extractive industries and the accompanying lost economic opportunities and population decline (<http://www.uned-uk.org>).

The tourism sector definitely provides various entry points for women's employment and opportunities for creating self-employment in small and medium sized income generating activities, thus creating paths towards the elimination of poverty of women and local communities in developing countries that is an essential factor for empowering of women in rural areas(Swain 1995, 251). But some researchers conclude that participating tourism organizations rationalize job segregation in relation to the culture of tourism. In addition, the informality of internal recruitment systems serves to reproduce existing organizational structures.(Fiona Jordan , 1997: 525-534). The researches show that although women dominate tourism employment, their situation mirrors that in other sectors, with significant horizontal vertical gender segregation (Pritchard et al, 2007). Horizontally , women and men typically have different occupations and most women are employed in jobs which reflect their traditional domestic roles. Vertically , women are squeezed out of directorships and senior posts, particularly in larger organizations and remain concentrated in lower-level occupations with few opportunities for upward mobility although recent occupation statistics indicate that women's presence in middle and upper management is growing in some developed countries (Pritchard, 2005) .In other word much of the female economic province outside the home takes place in the informal sector (Aspaas, 1998) But men are more often employed in the formal sector, which is recognized , encouraged and supported by public agencies. Similarly, many value-added agri-tourism activities find their origins among labor traditionally performed by women on the farm: preserving jams, jellies, and other foods, creating household items like quilts and baskets. Given these precursors, it would make sense for gender to play a role in agri-tourism entrepreneurship.

Another common aspect is the seasonal nature of tourism industry. Researchers are often critical of the seasonality of such work (Faulkenberry et al., 2002 and Gmelch, 2004), which also tends to offer low-paying, low-skilled opportunities with little chance for advancement (Chant, 1997 and Pattullo, 1996)

Some argue that this creates a particularly good condition for women enabling them to accommodate their various responsibilities. Also Women are much more likely to be employed on a part time basis than men are. As an industry, jobs in tourism are often seen as gendered, with many of the entry-level positions such as housekeeping, front-of-house work in hotels, restaurants, and attractions being seen as “women's work” (Hochschild, 1983; Kinnaird & Hall, 1994; Smith, 1989). Although tourism employment has led to increased benefits for women, it has resulted in negative changes as well. For instance, they generally have a longer workday since they typically retain

household duties in addition to paid labor outside the home. There may also be uneven control over household finances, and women may face difficulty gaining power at the community and higher levels (Sinclair, 1997 233)

Within this process, small enterprise development is commonly recognized as a gateway to economic independency, community empowerment and capacity building (Echtner, 1995: 32–41. Manyara and Jones, 2007 :628–644).

Gender, Tourism and economic effects

Tourism is often criticized for offering primarily low-skilled work that requires low levels of education; however, the fact that , its sectors require less education than non-tourism can be seen as having both negative and positive impacts. On the other word, this industry has created opportunities for women who otherwise had little or no employment choice.

Indeed in order to discover the changes in situation of women due to tourism extension , we shall combine the culturally and societally structured situation of women with the agency - an individual's capacity for action - of women living in that very situation. In the word of McNay (2004,177) "Structural Young (1990) has provided us with a thematization of the lived - in situation of a woman in patriarchy. Patriarchy is a social system in which men, as heads of domestic households, rule the society , and a symbolic order that gives priority to social relations, power struggles and descents between men (Veijola and Jokinen, 2001, 92-93). In this way, traditional gender roles determine what type of employment are most suitable or even possible for women (Cukier and Wall, 1995). Clearly the underlying reason for these issues of inequity is the traditional patriarchal order of social dominance, decision making and culture that exists in much of the developing world (Lesley Roberts and Derek Hall, 2002, 236) . In most cases the central figures of power are men who dictate their own roles and those of women. Resistance by a woman rarely surface because rebellion against the norm would insult the central power and bring dishonor to her family (Phillimore (2002). Although tourism development may reconstitute gendered power relations in narrow economic (or market) terms, in reality the broader power structures of inequality across society remain profoundly gender-biased, a pattern which is in many ways not only reinforced but also fuelled by processes of tourism development.(Ferguson , N.A: 12).

Promoting women's economic empowerment

The planning and sustainable development process must anchorage local initiative and entrepreneurship (Dadvar-Khani, 2012) .Along with an increasing focus on women's empowerment as a health and development goal, a growing body of literature has emerged which seeks to define and operationalise the concept. Women's agency is often expressed in terms of women's ability to make decisions and affect outcomes of importance to themselves and their families or, put another way, as women's control over their own lives and over resources. Kabeer (2001) offers a useful definition of empowerment that captures both elements, which we employ as a reference point in this paper: for her, empowerment refers to 'the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them'. As it discusses in the literature access to opportunities and resources are two important dimension of Women's economic empowerment process. Opportunity refers to a woman's power to make and act on decisions that would allow her to obtain valuable outcomes from economic activity. Productive resources are all the assets women need to achieve economic advancement. These range from tangible assets such as financial resources (income, savings, credit) and physical resources (land, housing, technology) to intangible assets such as skills, technical expertise, and social standing. But even when women are equipped with productive resources, this does not automatically mean that they are economically

empowered, (CESO, 2016) they must also have the opportunity to use those assets on the base of their choice.

A recent review (Malhotra et al. 2002) describes the diversity of this literature and highlights certain similarities in definitions of women's empowerment. Blumberg argues in her paper that boosting women's relative control of income and other economic resources has so many consequences that positively enhance both gender equality and development that female economic empowerment may be close to being a "magic potion." (Lesser Blumberg Rae ,2005 :5) All people have the opportunity to engage in economic activity to some degree or another, but women's chances are often relatively diminished compared to those of men across countries and societies (CESO ,2016). Santilldn et.al in their research conducted a literature review and interviews with government officials, representatives of mass organisations such as the Women's Union, gender experts working in local and international NGOs, and other researchers studying gender and women's empowerment in Vietnam. Based on this review, the team developed two initial sets of empowerment domains with illustrative indicators in each, which were revised somewhat as the analysis proceeded. One set of domains concerns women's social and economic roles, including decisions about production, housework, expenditures, relations with family and community, and attitudes about the rights of husbands and wives. The second encompasses various aspects of reproductive health, including decision making about reproduction, communication about and control over sexual relations, maternal health behaviours, views of health services, and attitudes about reproductive health roles and rights, including domestic violence and infidelity. The research team used these illustrative indicators as a guide in categorising each woman's level of empowerment in each domain (Santilldn et.al,2004:4).

The most researches show that, tourism development in the area has created more job for men as well as for women. Therefore, tourism is bringing new opportunity for them to participate in economic activities. Also, it gives them more independence and freedom, which leads to their empowerment. In Iran, tourism in the countryside is a new industry and is an important economic activity in some rural areas. Many small towns in Iran are facing serious economic and social problems. These communities have lost population , business have closed or relocated, the physical environment is deteriorating , the community's spirit is low , and the agricultural base is challenged by oil base economy and technology, in order To maintain economic activity and encourage continued prosperity, rural communities have had to respond by searching for alternative opportunities (Stolarick,20`16) and tourism as an alternative strategy can play an important role in promoting job creation and respond to declining social and economic circumstances (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2003) this situation dramatically enhance the economic empowerment of local community.

Methodology

The present study was conducted during 2015 to assess levels of empowerment and the role of tourism in economic empowerment process. The purpose of this study is based on descriptive and comparative methods, in the comparative study; two cases have been examined, mainly on the basis on economic empowerment of women. During the process of analysis, some new aspects had been added or dropped out fruitless ones. Those aspects that are similar in both the cases have been recorded. The study was conducted on women and girls in rural areas of the Kandovan and Iskandan villages, in the province of East Azarbaijan ,located in the north-west of Iran, bordering Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan . A fine network of roads and railways connect East Azarbaijan to other parts of Iran and also to neighboring countries. Kandovan Village, is one of the subordinates of Osku city located in East Azarbaijan Province, it is a very important tourism village in Iran that

is not only famous for its scenic beauty, but also its uniqueness that comes from the fact that many of its homes have been made in caves located in cone-shaped rock-formation. Tourism in this area has created a variety of job opportunities, so that an important part of community is involve in the tourism activities. Also, Eskandan is a village in near to Kandovan, in the same Province and in the Central District of Osku County., its population was 837, in 231 families(General Census of Population and Housing 2006).So different nature of these villages regarding tourism attractions ,facilitate the comparing of the economic empowerment of women, which is related to this industry.

The data have been collected by field work including questioner and interview. A questionnaire was managed to answer personal characteristics as well as economic empowerment variables. Likert scale was used to collect the data. The questioner validity and reliability had been measured by expert team and also Cronbach's alpha, which showed 85% validity. Statistical population was the females who were living in the both villages. So in Kandovan and Eskandan villages 301 and 402 female respectively were living. Since 30 percent of population has been selected as a sample , 90 females from Kandovan and 120 females from Eskandan were selected randomly . For brevity we may call these two villages TD (Tourism Destination) for Kandovan and NTD (non- Tourism Destination) for Eskandan .

Findings of the study

Despite the status code and traditional restriction on women in Middle East, tourism is found also as a tool to empower them in various degrees. In the cases that Ateljevic's research group have studied in Middle East, women are empowered more from the aspect of economic independence through enterprise in tourism. With some success individual cases in tourism industry, the effect of women empowerment could be spread more widely in various aspects through programmes setup i.e. training and networking (Ateljevic,2008:98) .Employment status can be one of the most important components of economic empowerment. The differences in job opportunities, involvement of women in the labor market, variety and structure of jobs and entrepreneurship in the region can greatly clarify the effects of tourism on women's economic empowerment. To create a clear image about the impact of tourism on employment and entrepreneurship, employment and unemployment in rural areas is studied and analyzed. As shown in Table 1there is a significant difference between employment and unemployment of women in two villages.

Table 1: The employment and unemployment rate of population in selected rural areas.

Villages	Employment rate		Unemployment rate	
	F	%	F	%
TD	64	71.1	26	28.9
NTD	59	49.2	61	50.8

The employment pattern is one of the main factors in the study of economic empowerment .Since agriculture is the dominant activity in the rural areas, most scholars believe that the rural development requires diversification in the economy sector. This is particularly critical for women . The two villages imply significant differences regarding the pattern, distribution and composition of employment of women. As it is shown in Table 2, in the TD village, service sector with 42.2 % contains a highest rate of women's employment, followed by industry and agriculture with absorbing of 31.2 and 26.6 respectively of working women. This situation is completely different in NTD village. The economic participation of women—their presence in the workforce in quantitative terms—is important not only for lowering the disproportionate levels of poverty among women, but also as an important step toward raising household income and encouraging economic development in countries as a whole (Lopez-Claros, et. al,2005: 5)

Table 2: Distribution of the female workers in the main economic sectors in selected villages.

Villages	Economic sectors						Total
	Agriculture		Industry		services		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
TD	17	26	20	31.2	27	42.2	
NTD	38	64.4	11	18.6	10	17	

The data presented shows that some opportunities arise because of the “housewifization of labor,” which Mies explains as the creation of employment based on and tied to traditional ideas regarding the assignment of tasks such as cooking and cleaning (Bennholdt-Thomsen and et.al 1984). Entrepreneurship is one of the most important output of economic empowerment. Thus, to understand the situation of women entrepreneurs in rural areas, the number of women who set up and managed their business independently, were studied. The result shows that almost 47 % of women in TD village and 27% in NTD village have started their business and managed it successfully.

Table 3: The women’s work situation in the selected areas

Villages	Owner of independent business		Worker in the family business		Other kind of work	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
TD	30	46.9	28	43.7	6	9.4
NTD	16	27.1	39	66.1	4	6.8

Empowered individuals are ready to grasp the opportunity so that, access to these opportunities is most important characteristics of empowered and entrepreneurs’ rural women. Indeed an environment that enjoy from the potential opportunities to establish a business, is effective to increase the understanding and identification of the new opportunities. Therefore to find out that does tourism have positive effect on creating the more active and aware environment, the data has been analysed in table 4.

Table 4: Economic environment and women’s work opportunity in selected areas

Statements	Means		Result of Test
	TD	NTD	
There are variety of opportunities for women’s business	90	64.19	0.000
There are proper fields For investment	91.29	35	0.000
Different types of businesses can be created in rural areas	89.61	36.55	0.000
There are many opportunities for creating new business	86.24	39.66	0.000
There are variety of rural employment for women	78.93	46.39	0.000
women are encourage to open their business	84.31	41.43	0.000

As it is shown in table above, in all items TD village has higher means and the Mann-Whitney Test indicate shows the significant differences between two villages.

Table 5: Mann–Whitney Test to show the difference of women’s opinion regarding economic environment in selected village

Mann–Whitney Test	Results
Mann–Whitney Test	269500
Asym.sig(2-tailed)	0.000

Field observations also indicated the differences between these villages in terms of a variety of available jobs in the villages. For example, in the TS village there are different type of jobs Such

as: Handicraft stores, shops selling local products such as dried fruits, medicinal plants and readymade foods, catering and visiting maintenance, room rental, hotel's services, Production and selling local foods, and seasonal activities . Despite of the short distance between these two villages, these jobs are not available in NTD village, because these jobs have been created by tourism in the TD village. Indeed some of the residents in peripheral villages are selling their product in TS local market at tourism season.

As it was indicated in the literature so far, tourism can effects on the economic environment of rural areas, one of the most important effects is to enhance entrepreneurial characteristics. So these aspects was tested and shown in table (6).

Table 6: The entrepreneurial mentality among women and girls in selected villages.

Economic and entrepreneurial behaviours	Statements	The Means		Test results
		TD	NTD	
Risks	the ability to cope with challenges	74.33	50.63	0.000
	Preferring new business methods to traditional ones.	77.33	47.887	0.000
	Interesting to do new projects instead old and regular methods.	74.47	50.50	0.000
	Willingness to take deliberate risks	78.25	47.02	0.000
	Being innovative	72.14	52.65	0.002
	Enjoying from taking financial risks	75.95	46.98	
	Interesting to do work differently	75.63	49.53	0.000
	Borrowing money for investment.	75.42	49.63	0.000
	Having Ambitious aspirations	89.81	36.37	0.000
	Total number for Risk	77.02	44.90	0.000
Creativity and Innovation	Curious to discover new thing about the business	72.44	52.38	0001
	The ability to discover and incorporate new ways to solve a problem	74.61	50.38	0.000
	Always thinking of starting a new business	67.39	57.03	00.020
	Trying to start a projects	68.22	55.22	0.023
	Having variety of new ideas	74.05	48.92	0.000
	Total innovation index	71.34	52.79	0.003
Tolerance of Uncertainty	Accepting difficult situations	65.57	58.71	0.262
	Embracing change	73.56	51.34	0.000
	Management of stress in uncertainty	67.01	58.03	0.023
	Total index of tolerance	70.52	53.83	0.009
Self-confidence	Ability to provide the necessary tools to create business	73.56	51.34	0.000
	Ensure the success of a plan or project	75.65	49.41	0.000
	To be able to believe that anything is possible	71.33	68.40	0.108
	Having positive thinking about the hard work	73.26	51.62	0.000
	Total index of confidence	73.45	55.19	0.002

As it indicated in table 6, there are significant differences among female economic empowerment in two villages and in all characteristics related to the economic empowerment, such as: Risks, Creativity, Tolerance of Uncertainty and Innovation, participants in TD village gain higher means. Also in the Self –confidence category female in TD village presented a higher mean marks than NTD village except that the third option "to be able to believe, that anything is possible."

So it indicates that tourism development in TD village positively has been affected on female economic empowerment.

The field research also shows that due to the nature of being profitable, employment and participation in tourism activities is mainly turn to a family activity that involved all members of the family. So that , 18 percent of women were running tourism by help of their husbands and 26% with help of other male members of the family , and 16 percent of them with help of all family members. Indeed the extracted information from interview showed that the most important motivation for women in participating in tourism is Personal interest, searching for new source of income, creating a positive impression about their village on Tourists, finding jobs for other members of family and diversification of their life. It indicates that women are engaged in tourism to gain independence and to change their daily life.

In other words, women are searching to improve public sphere and reduce from patriarchy in rural society. They also mentioned that they are interested in participate in social activities related to tourism. Similarly, the results show that tourism causes women to gain more knowledge and increase their social contacts.

Conclusion

The results showed that due to the more and diverse business opportunities in rural tourism destination for women, the rate of women's employment in rural tourism destination compared to other village was higher. One of the important reason refers to nature of works that tourism creates, which are in a very large range from part time unprofessional and small business works to professional and large companies. Therefore, women's are able to participate in different levels and be able to combine their business with house works. The research finding specifies that the TD village has the highest percentage of employment in industry and services, while in the other village; the majority of rural female labor force is concentrated in agriculture. Moreover, tourism development in the area led to development of infrastructure, crating the new job opportunities, increasing in community's financial bargaining power, investment in the tourism destination, as well as increasing in female awareness and improvement in cultural dimension and strengthens of this idea that women can run their own business. Based on the above results, it is recommended that gender sensitive planning should be considered in rural tourism planning and due to effect of tourism; female's entrepreneurship should be supported and extended by government.

Finally, the result shows the tourism sector provides various entry points for women's employment and opportunities for creating self - employment in small and medium sized income generating activities but it has failed to decrease gender inequality in rural area. So we can consider tourism as a tool for economic improvement of women's situation. It is similar to Swain (1995) founding. Also, the test result shows that there are significant differences among female economic empowerment in two villages and in all characteristics related to the economic empowerment, such as: Risks, Creativity, Tolerance of Uncertainty and Innovation, participants in TD village gain higher means. Also in the Self –confidence category female in TD village presented a higher mean marks than NTD village except that the third option "to be able to believe, that anything is possible." Therefore, it indicates that tourism development in TD village positively has been affected on female economic empowerment.

In order to better understand the conditions that tourism has brought for women, their opinion and attitude regarding economic and entrepreneurship and their understanding about effect of tourism have been researched, the result indicates that tourism lead to provide a better space for women activities and more jobs for women and in some levels it lead to economic empowerment of women. There is evidence to suggest that use of equal opportunities policies can provide one

possible means of resistance to job segregation in tourism, meanwhile it needs to more participation of local people specially women in different level of education.

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