

Tourism as a Tool of Women Empowerment: A General Review – by Sharmila Acharya

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Abstract

Tourism is an applicable tool of community development through the women empowerment. The development of tourism in a specified community zone empowers the people from social, economic, political, and psychological dimensions. The paper aims to identify tourism as a tool of women empowerment in community development. To identify tourism as a tool to women empowerment it needs in-depth analysis of issues from intense literature review. It is an intense review of the study on, Tourism as a Tool of Women Empowerment: A General Review. In conclusion, the study identify tourism can be a perfect or a complete tool of women empowerment in any specified community. The identity of the community, culture of hospitality, rites and rituals, household prayers and worship, and livelihood strategies, are the main tourism attractions, in every household is led by women in most of the society.

Keywords: Review, Tools, Tourism, and Women Empowerment

Introduction

Empowerment is adding extra power to a natural phenomenon. Empowerment is coded as one of the 12 aims for sustainable tourism. It is considered as an important requirement for achieving sustainable tourism development through the women empowerment. Tourism is believed to be able to empower people economically, at both the individual and community levels, by alleviating poverty through the provision of various employment and business opportunities to community members (Rachmawatia, Fountainb, & Mackayb, 2021). These community members led by women in most of the destinations have shown positive women empowerment signs.

Most of the studies show, tourism can empower women from multidimensional approach. Tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that refers to traveling. Tourism opens doors for women. It plays a critical role in empowering women politically, socially, and economically (Joy, Johnson, & Kavitha, 2023). Thus socio-economic, political and psychological empowerment of women is possible at once from tourism development. When a woman is empowered, family is

empowered and when family is empowered whole society is empowered that is why it is said that a woman is the torch bearer of the society (Slathia, Paul, & Nain, 2015). Through the women the community as a whole will be empowered.

Much rhetoric has frequently focused on tourism as a potential vehicle for women empowerment, but the highly gendered activity of tourism has often been neglected (Seyfi, Hall, & Vo-Thanh, 2022). Tourism therefore can potentially support economic empowerment by generating employment, income, and providing entrepreneurial opportunities from economic perspective. However, it serves in another socio-cultural dimensions as well.

By the initiation of tourism-based entrepreneurship in local community, local women have attained not only economic but also psychological, social and political empowerment (Movono & Dahles, 2017) in many tourism destinations. The study in Fiji, about indigenous Fijian women, through involvement in tourism, have adapted to becoming successful business operators and influential drivers of socio-political change affecting established gender relations within the community very effectively.

The first gender topics explored in the tourism literature included: perpetuating gendered stereotypes in tourism destinations by Ireland in 1993, and McKay, in 1993. Gendered differences in perceptions of tourism at different stages of development by Harvey, Hunt, and Harris, in 1995. Similarly, power relations contributing to gender disparities by Kinnaird and Hall, in 1996 and Wilkinson and Pratiwi, in 1995. And economic independence for women through tourism by Butler and Connele in 1993 and Purcell in 1993 (Boley, Ayscue, Maruyama, & Woosnam, 2017). All these studies show that tourism is an effective tool of women empowerment. Massive cancellations of hotel bookings and tourists followed, leading to widespread unemployment, loss of income, and threatened livelihoods for thousands. (Khanal, 2020) due to the COVID-19 but now it is in track. However, tourism is not being used as the effective tool of women empowerment and community development. Thus to present it as an effective tool the study is being conducted.

Objective

To present tourism as a tool of women empowerment

Materials and Methods

The study is a general review of empowerment from tourism. The empowerment framework, designed for analysis of the impacts of tourism ventures on local communities, attempts to emphasize the importance of local communities having some control over, and sharing in the benefits of, tourism initiatives in their area. The rationale behind the framework is that tourism should promote both conservation and development at the local level. The framework could be applied in both western and developing country contexts but, because it takes as its central concern the concept of empowerment, it is perhaps particularly pertinent when examining the extent to which indigenous people, or other disadvantaged groups, are benefiting from tourism (Scheyvens, 1999).

Scheyvens' Empowerment Framework

SN	Dimensions	Signs of Empowerment	Signs of Disempowerment
1	Economic empowerment	Tourism brings lasting economic gains to a local community. Cash earned is shared between many households in the community. There are visible signs of improvements from the cash that is earned (e.g., houses are made of more permanent materials; more children are able to attend school).	Tourism merely results in small, spasmodic cash gains for a local community. Most profits go to local elites, outside operators, government agencies, etc. Only a few individuals or families gain direct financial benefits from tourism, while others cannot find a way to share in these economic benefits because they lack capital, experience and/or appropriate skills.
2	Psychological empowerment	Self-esteem of many community members is enhanced because of outside recognition of the uniqueness and value of their culture, their natural resources and their traditional knowledge. Access to employment and cash	Those who interact with tourists are left feeling like their culture and way of life are inferior. Many people do not share in the benefits of tourism and are thus confused, frustrated, disinterested or disillusioned with the initiative.

		leads to an increase in status for traditionally low-status sectors of society e.g., youths, the poor.	
3	Social empowerment	<p>Tourism maintains or enhances the local community's equilibrium. Community cohesion is improved as individuals and families work together to build a successful tourism venture. Some funds raised are used for community development purposes, e.g., to build schools or improve water supplies.</p>	<p>Disharmony and social decay. Many in the community take on outside values and lose respect for traditional culture and for their elders. Disadvantaged groups (e.g., women) bear the brunt of problems associated with the tourism initiative and fail to share equitably in its benefits. Rather than cooperating, families/ ethnic or socio-economic groups compete with each other for the perceived benefits of tourism. Resentment and jealousy are commonplace.</p>
4	Political empowerment	<p>The community's political structure fairly represents the needs and interests of all community groups. Agencies initiating or implementing the tourism venture seek out the opinions of a variety of community groups (including special interest groups of women, youths and other socially disadvantaged groups) and provide opportunities for them to be represented on decision-making bodies e.g., the Wildlife Park</p>	<p>The community has an autocratic and/or self-interested leadership. Agencies initiating or implementing the tourism venture fail to involve the local community in decision-making so the majority of community members feel they have little or no say over whether the tourism initiative operates or the way in which it operates</p>

		Board or the regional tourism association.	
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(Joy, Johnson, & Kavitha, 2023) (Scheyvens, 1999)

This model reinforces the centrality of empowerment as a concept to consider when analyzing the impacts of tourism on people’s lives in destination communities (Joy, Johnson, & Kavitha, 2023). The multidimensional approach of women empowerment is generally based on rural tourism development on society, economy, culture, politics, and psychology (Scheyvens, 1999). Thus the women empowerment seems a successful attempt of tourism development in a specified community. Nepal is the land of Village. Sirubari village is regarded as the first rural village in Nepal who initiated rural tourism and homestay program (Subedi, 2016). The home stay has significantly empowered the community and developed the tourism.

Result and Discussion

According to Scheyvens’ Empowerment Framework, there are four (4) dimensions of women empowerment through tourism development strategy of a community. Tourism produces Economic, Psychological, Social, and Political empowerment on community women in any specified community (Joy, Johnson, & Kavitha, 2023). Treating empowerment as multi-dimensional allows researchers to dig down deep into not only the overarching power structures within communities (political empowerment) but also to investigate how tourism effects community pride and self-esteem (psychological empowerment), cohesion and collaboration (social empowerment), the retention and sharing of economic benefits (economic empowerment), and tourism’s effect on natural resource conservation (environmental empowerment) (Boley, Ayscue, Maruyama, & Woosnam, 2017). Thus, according to Scheyvens’ finding the following four dimensions are analyzed or discussed.

Economic empowerment

Economic empowerment is the empowerment of women from economic perspective. From the different studies, any form of tourism, that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefitting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling tourism experience is the main stream of socio-economic empowerment of the community and specially women (Slathia, Paul, & Nain, 2015). To enable women socially and

economically empowered tourism has addressed issues of poverty reduction and gave women a chance to earn a living with equity and dignity. Tourism is believed to be able to empower people economically, both at the individual and community levels, by providing various employment and business opportunities to community members to help alleviate poverty (Rachmawatia, Fountainb, & Mackayb, 2021). The problem of every household of poor community is poverty. Tourism creates jobs in homes. Tourism creates market in home. Tourism brings lasting economic gains to a local community. Cash earned is shared between many households in the community. There are visible signs of improvements from the cash that is earned (e.g., houses are made of more permanent materials; more children are able to attend school). Thus it creates prosperity in human life. The prosperity empowers the humanity from social and economic perspective.

Psychological empowerment

The psychological dimension of empowerment focuses on the capacity of tourism development to either build up residents' pride and self-esteem or to undermine it by making residents feel inferior (Boley, Ayscue, Maruyama, & Woosnam, 2017). Atithidevobhava! Guests are God, it is a popular saying of Nepal, it means similar to the Customer is King. What will happen a God or King visits in our home as a guest? when everyday like such guests come and pay for food and stay with handsome tips people will be happy. The happiness brings further happiness and the happiness leads the psychological empowerment. Self-esteem of many community members is enhanced because of outside recognition of the uniqueness and value of their culture, their natural resources and their traditional knowledge. Access to employment and cash leads to an increase in status for traditionally low-status sectors of society e.g., youths, the poor. The ultimate goal of life is happiness and the happiness comes only from happiness. Without any reason we must be able to be happy.

Social empowerment

Gender equality and empowerment are core components of sustainable tourism (Boley, Ayscue, Maruyama, & Woosnam, 2017). To be a complete home we must have a family. Only with being two Social empowerment improves empowerment's focus on to the relationships between community members and how tourism development effects the community's cohesion and ability to collaborate. Tourism maintains or enhances the local community's equilibrium. Community cohesion is improved as individuals and families work together to build a successful tourism

venture. Some funds raised are used for community development purposes, e.g., to build schools or improve water supplies.

Political empowerment

Political empowerment is the dimension of empowerment most often described in articles that take a unidimensional approach to addressing power relations within tourism development (Boley, Ayscue, Maruyama, & Woosnam, 2017). The community's political structure fairly represents the needs and interests of all community groups. Agencies initiating or implementing the tourism venture seek out the opinions of a variety of community groups (including special interest groups of women, youths and other socially disadvantaged groups) and provide opportunities for them to be represented on decision-making bodies e.g., the Wildlife Park Board or the regional tourism association. Tourism allows to explore the local way of life with an understanding of the local standard of living as well as the social life and the local civilization (Adhikari, 2020). When women are empowered from social, psychological, and economic dimension political people appoint her in positions. Then she will be empowered politically as well. The cultural tourism increases the political empowerment (Badal, 2021). Thus cultural tourism development plans are necessary in local level.

Conclusion

Thus in conclusion tourism is only a significant community development tool to empower women from economic, social, psychological, and political dimension. It means that tourism can empower women from entire perspective of society. Thus community development should initiate tourism development strategy in local level on the issues of sustainable development and gender issues.

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