

Top50 Global Economic Forum 2023

**International Research Symposium
Empowering Women for Inclusive Growth and
Sustainable Development**

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

**Jointly Organized by
Women in Management
&
Alumni ATEHM, University of Colombo**

EDITORS

**Prof. D.A.C. Suranga Silva
Prof. Mubarak Kaldeen
Plnr. Prathibhani Bandusena
Mr. Sampath Siriwardena**

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16th June 2023

Colombo, Sri Lanka

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**Book of Abstracts of the International Research Symposium on
Empowering Women for Inclusive Growth
and Sustainable Tourism - 2023
Jointly Organized by
Women in Management and Alumni ATEHM University of Colombo**

**Published by
Alumni ATEHM
Tourism Study Programmes
Department of Economics, Faculty of Arts
University of Colombo
Sri Lanka**

**The eBook is published in eRepository Platform of
University of Colombo**

ISBN: ISBN 978-624-5873-69-2

BAR Code:



9 786245 873692

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International Research Symposium

**Empowering Women for Inclusive Growth and
Sustainable Development**

2023

[THE BOOK OF ABSTRACTS]

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Message from the Founder & Chairperson

Women in Management

I am honoured to highlight an exceptional partnership that has been forged between the Women in Management (WIM) organization and our esteemed Sri-Lanka and Alumni Association of Tourism Economics and Hospitality Management (AATEHM), Department of Economics, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo. This partnership aims to conduct a Symposium on Empowering Women for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development. I believe this collaboration is an essential step towards creating a more equitable and prosperous society. It is crucial to acknowledge the challenges that women continue to face in various spheres of life. Despite significant progress in recent years, gender disparities persist, limiting the potential and contributions of half the world's population. The time has come for us to join hands and work towards diversity and inclusivity, providing them with the opportunities and support they need to thrive.



The partnership between WIM and AATEHM is founded on a shared vision of promoting gender equality, recognizing the pivotal role women play in driving inclusive growth and sustainable development. Together, we have embarked on a mission to create a platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaboration, focusing on the Women's taking Center Stage for Economic Recovery.

The Symposium on highlighting women economic contribution for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development will serve as a catalyst for change. It will bring together leaders, experts, academics, and community members who are committed to advancing gender equality and diversity. Through engaging discussions, interactive workshops, and insightful keynote speeches, we will explore the multifaceted challenges faced by women and identify actionable solutions. By collaborating with AATEHM, WIM brings a wealth of expertise, networks, and resources to the table. University of Colombo, with its academic rigor, research capabilities, and commitment to societal impact, provides the ideal setting to facilitate meaningful dialogue and knowledge dissemination.

Together, we aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice, translating research into actionable strategies that will create tangible change.

Dr. Sulochana Segera

Founder & Chairperson

Women in Management

Sri Lanka/Maldives/ Canada/ UAE

Message from the Symposium Chair

It is with a great pleasure to convey this message on the Research Symposium on Women's Engagement in Economy Recovery-2023 organized by Women in Management (WIM) in Sri-Lanka and Alumni Association of Tourism Economics and Hospitality Management (AATEHM), Department of Economics, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka on 16th June 2023 at Galadari Hotel-Colombo.



According to the Global Gender Gap Report-2018 published by the World Economic Forum (WEF), the female participation for socio-economic development continue to remain low around 38.5 percent in 2018, compared to 78.9 percent for men. Furthermore, this report also revealed that globally, women earn, on average, only 63% of what men earn for similar work. Reducing this pay gap not only promotes fairness but also has a positive impact on overall economic performance. Leveraging the full potential of women's talent and skills is essential for driving economic progress and prosperity. Reducing gender gaps in labour force participation, wage equality, and access to economic opportunities lead to increased productivity, competitiveness, and inclusive growth. Supporting women-owned businesses and enabling their access to capital and markets can lead to job creation, innovation, and inclusive economic prosperity.

When considering the Sri Lankan context, the widening gender gap is not yet properly addressed and the important contribution of economic engagement of Sri Lankan women is severely disregarded though they represent more than 55 percent of the total population.

On the other hand, one of the decisive factors determining the effectiveness of policy and decision makings for enhancing the women contribution on Sri Lanka's economic growth and development is the availability of evidenced-based information collected through the results-focused and action-oriented research findings.

Therefore, Alumni Association of Tourism Economics and Hospitality Management (AATEHM), Department of Economics, University of Colombo has taken the necessary leadership to create an industry-policy and academia dialogue through organizing this symposium as a most synergized intellectual platform to disseminate and discuss the most effective ways and measurers to advance gender equality, promote women's economic empowerment, and harness the full potential of female contributions for sustainable and inclusive economic growth and development in Sri Lanka.

With the right direction through the collaboration of Women in Management (WIM), this symposium is to produce several key knowledge contributions under the following specific research themes:

- Recovering the collapsed economy through the promotion of diversity and inclusion
- Resilience Building of Human Resources through an equitable and inclusive workplace
- Transforming the economies to the prosperity through responsible entrepreneurship with Technopreneurship
- Improving the women directorships through providing more opportunities for the representation in the corporate boards
- Engaging male championship for gender inclusivity at work
- Creating the female's innovative contribution for emerging new markets and so on

We are confident that this International Research Symposium will make a significant contribution to all industry stakeholders in designing their economic strategies and services to create a new strong vista to enhance the confidence on the capability of women contribution on sustainable and inclusive economic growth and prosperity in Sri Lanka.

We would also like to convey our deep gratitude to the national and international panelists, authors, industry experts and the organizing committee members, who have made an unmatched and outstanding contribution to make this symposium a great success.

Finally, last but not least, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to the WIM, IFC and Australian aid and all the sponsors for their great supports as the key strategic partners of this symposium to make this symposium one of most remarkable and contributable event for the women empowerment and consequently their possible contribution for the economic growth and prosperity in Sri Lanka.

Prof. (Dr). D.A.C.Suranga Silva

Symposium Chair

Coordinator, Tourism Study Programs, Department of Economics,

Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo



Keynote Speaker

Dr. Mariyam Shakeela

HONORARY CONSUL OF BELGIUM IN MALDIVES

CEO SIMDI Group of Companies

Chairperson for Addu Women's Association and WACAM

President of Women's Chamber of Commerce, Maldives

“Empowering Women for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development.”

The empowerment of women in leadership positions, to participate in decision-making processes, to have access to resources has been recognized as a crucial factor in achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development. While the paper discusses positive impacts of women's involvement and its significance on economic growth, poverty reduction, improved health, and social development in achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development, it also examines the importance of women's empowerment and leadership without succumbing to pressure including gender-based discrimination, pressure from patriarchal and socially prescribed norms and bias. The paper also traces the historical evolution of women's empowerment and highlights the barriers that still hinders the realization of women's full potential and examines the policies and initiatives designed to empower women and evaluated their effectiveness. The paper also explores the importance of building self-awareness, harnessing self-confidence, and resilience, establishing strong networks, seeking mentorship in overcoming the challenges and remain steadfast to succeed in leadership roles. The author believes, the key to women's empowerment lies not only with policy makers, but within women themselves and their ability to resist the challenges once they reach leadership roles. Finally, the paper concludes with a call for scaling up efforts to empower women as a key strategy for achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development

Top50 Global Economic Forum 2023

International Research Symposium

**Empowering Women for Inclusive Growth and
Sustainable Development**

**TECHNICAL SESSIONS AND PANEL
DISCUSSIONS**

Technical Session 01

Women Entrepreneurship and Inclusive Growth



Prof. D.A.C. Suranga Silva
Professor in Tourism Economics
University of Colombo



Ms. Nida Usman Chaudhary
Lahore Education & Research
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Technical Session 2

Women's Career Advancement and Economic Development



Prof. Kaldeen Mubarak
Professor in Marketing
South Eastern University of Sri Lanka



Prof. Cindy Yoshiko Shirata
Honorary Professor at Tokyo
International University



Dr. Kumudika Boyagoda
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Technical Session 03

Innovative Women's Venture Creation and Intrapreneurship



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**Director,
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Mr. Chintana Duminduhewa

**Country Head,
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Technical Session 04

Women's Empowerment and Sustainability



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Women Entrepreneurship and Inclusive Growth

Role of Empowering, Energizing, and Revitalizing Women Entrepreneurs in Establishing Sustainable Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Galle City

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Abstract

Women entrepreneurs are socially influential in educating and having a good social influence in both developed and underdeveloped nations. Private enterprises, mainly through small-to-medium enterprises, have been perceived as a significant and powerful means for solid financial expansion, invigorating monetary advancement, and guaranteeing equivalent sharing and dissemination of abundance in Galle city. Women entrepreneurs in Galle who are well-equipped with entrepreneurial skills contribute to and support the economy extensively in diverse ways of being employed successfully in small and medium-scale enterprises. It is important to study how to empower, energize, and revitalize women in Galle in business and their skills can be utilized in order to achieve a sustainable economy for Galle city in Sri Lanka. The objectives of this research study were based on the study of directing Galle women entrepreneurs to a sustainable economy, social system, and ecology. A descriptive qualitative research methodology was utilized for this research study and administered to a selected sample from a specific population including with hundred women in businesses and executives who are from private and public sector offices as respondents from Galle city. Maximum variety and intensity sampling were utilized in selecting those respondents. This research study consisted of a ten-month duration which utilized a self-designed semi-structured questionnaire as the survey instrument. It was revealed from the survey that the women entrepreneurs in Galle city could be positioned to play a vital role in enhancing sustainable practices in economics, social system, and ecology, to result in sustainable development. Further, it was observed that the positive effects of women's entrepreneurship in the economy and development are key to developing Galle to promote sustainable practices in business. It is suggested for future research studies enabling and measuring the contributions of women's entrepreneurship to sustainable development including capital investments on women-led enterprises.

Keywords: *Women entrepreneurs, sustainable development, small and medium scale enterprises, establishing.*

An Empirical Review on the Role of Women Entrepreneurs in Sustainable Business Practices in Small and Medium-sized Businesses

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Abstract

Gender differences are a major concern in many regions of the world, as they may impede economic growth and development opportunities. It is important to recognize that women as a vital part of community development and their contributions to society should not be overlooked, especially in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is a crucial aspect of the national economy and has become increasingly important in society, creating job opportunities, enhancing competitiveness, and modernizing the economy. The process of entrepreneurship encompasses the establishment of both small & medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and large business ventures. Thus, SMEs play a crucial role in promoting a culture of women entrepreneurship. In developing nations, SMEs have a significant impact on the economy and can address sustainable development related concerns adequately. The concept of sustainability is a crucial factor to consider when designing the future of the economy, and the integration of women's entrepreneurship with sustainability is an interesting topic to explore in the pursuit of sustainable development. This study aims to investigate the role of women entrepreneurs in the sustainable business practices of SMEs. A systematic review was conducted by selecting twenty scholarly papers from reputed sources including Emerald Insight, Research Gate, and Google Scholar. The chosen papers were relevant and of interest to the topics of women entrepreneurship, sustainability, small and medium-sized enterprises, and sustainable business practices. The literature on women entrepreneurship and sustainable business practices in SMEs is still an underdeveloped area due to the novelty of the topic. The study highlights that women entrepreneurs frequently establish businesses based on their expertise, experience, value-added services, service quality, and environmental impact. The involvement of female entrepreneurs in promoting sustainability is advantageous, as it allows for the dissemination of skills of women within the workforce and increases the likelihood of developing strategies to support sustainable business activities. The main conclusion of this research supports the notion that women's awareness of sustainability is crucial when developing sustainable business practices in SMEs.

Keywords: *Women entrepreneurship; sustainability; small & medium-sized enterprises; sustainable business practices*

From Start-Up to Sustainability: Exploring the Challenges and Empowering Small-Scale Women Entrepreneurs in Kandy District, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Small-scale women entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in promoting economic development, especially in developing nations like Sri Lanka. However, these entrepreneurs encounter multiple obstacles that impede their growth and long-term viability. Despite various empowerment initiatives, they face significant difficulties in obtaining the necessary resources and support to expand their businesses. Despite the crucial role of small-scale women entrepreneurs in promoting economic development, their sustainability remains a critical issue in Sri Lanka. Although there have been various efforts to empower them, there is little understanding of the degree of inclusiveness and effectiveness of these initiatives. This study aims to investigate the challenges and constraints faced by small-scale women entrepreneurs (SSWEs) in Kandy District, explore how these constraints limit their sustainability, and propose strategies for empowering them toward long-term sustainability. The study utilized a mixed-method research design, including a survey of seventy SSWEs and in-depth interviews with ten female entrepreneurs. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis methods were applied to analyse data. The study identified three primary themes as key findings related to challenges and constraints that impede the sustainability of SSWEs, including economic factors such as the impact of economic crises, limited access to finance, capital, and markets; sociocultural factors such as gender-based stereotypes and discrimination, role and time demands of work and life; and organizational factors such as inadequate training and education, complex and inflexible rules and regulations, and institutional malpractices. The study reveals that these constraints are interconnected and are reinforcing one another, further limiting the sustainability of SSWEs. To address these challenges, a multidimensional approach is required to address the interrelated and reinforcing factors that limit the sustainability of SSWEs. This study offers insights for policymakers in designing and implementing policies and programs that promote the sustainability of SSWEs.

Keywords: *Women, entrepreneurs, sustainability, challenges, empowerment*

Factors Influencing on Women Entrepreneurs' Performance in Small and Medium Enterprises in Sri Lanka

M.F. Nusaika, D.G. M.L.W. Kumari, M. I. F. Abrose, A. L.F. Nadhiya
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Abstract

Concern over women's entrepreneurship has grown in recent years, and now there are programs and institutions helping women founders with funds, education, networking opportunities, mentoring, and public policy. The economic growth of Sri Lanka is strongly aided by women entrepreneurs. The majority of small and medium-sized businesses have come up with innovative products and services, and by doing so, they contribute to the development of the national economy. Such small and medium-sized businesses must be established properly to support national development. The objective of the study is to investigate the factors that influence the performance of women entrepreneurs in small and medium businesses of Sri Lanka. This study was performed as a cross-sectional survey, where the data was gathered using a specially designed questionnaire distributed using the random sampling technique, two hundred women entrepreneurs were chosen as the sample. The result had shown that the performance of women entrepreneurs is significantly influenced by their educational background, prior entrepreneurial experience, access to financing, government support, land ownership, tax, business training, access to information, entrepreneur orientation, human capital, entrepreneurship goals, motivational factors, and social and cultural factors. On the other hand, it is discovered that factors such as age, marital status, access to physical infrastructure, and market access are having an insignificant influence on women entrepreneurs' performance. The findings of the research might be used as inputs for policymakers and to promote an environment that helps women entrepreneurs succeed. Further, the study may aid women entrepreneurs in addressing the variables that affect performance. Hence, they may take steps to enhance it, which will assist in poverty alleviation, promoting wealth & creativity, and creation of job opportunities. The study adds to the body of knowledge on the factors that influence women entrepreneurs' performance in small and medium enterprises.

Keywords: *Women entrepreneurs, performance, small and medium enterprises, factors*

Using Business Coaching as a Tool to Develop Women Entrepreneurs for Sustainable SME Sector

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Abstract

Women entrepreneurs in the SME sector in Sri Lanka account for 25% of the total sector and they struggle to transition away from business, partly due to their inadequate business skills and capacities. Many surveys conducted in this sector indicate that they would benefit from business restructuring advice or the knowledge on how to adjust their business plan in response to different situations and to sustain in the competition. With this background, we undertook a project of Business Coaching for 20 women entrepreneurs involved in food-related business and are in various stages of the business life cycle. The ultimate objective of the study is to enhance the capacity of these vulnerable groups of women enterprisers through Business Coaching and empower them to be more resilient and adaptive to the effect of external forces whilst maintaining profitability and contributing to sustainable SME development. The entrepreneurs who were willing to be coached were assessed based on their needs and the required support level based on a model which was agreed upon before the coaching sessions. Physical Business coaching was conducted on a one-to-one basis and each entrepreneur was entrusted to a qualified and experienced coach who guided them to go forward with their goals. The capacity of all women entrepreneurs was enhanced with an 83% success rate, and they were encouraged to go forward with their short-term and long-term goals contributing to the national GDP. Process improvement of many technical areas such as finance, Sales and Marketing, and people management were re-engineered with appropriate strategies. They were guided to monitor the quality of food products as per Good Manufacturing Practices -GMP, paving the way to export marketing. The most significant outcome of the business coaching session was the increase in the level of empowerment. They were able to make decisions for their business with confidence as a result of identifying hidden talents and strengths within themselves and were willing to go forward with an all-inclusive plan for profitability and sustainability.

Keywords: *Women entrepreneurs, Business Coaching, Empowerment, Sustainability*

Role of Women Entrepreneurs in Establishing a Sustainable Development in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Given its potential to spur economic growth, advance gender equality, inspire innovation, have a positive social impact, and support diversity and inclusivity, women's entrepreneurship is an important field of research and practice. Women entrepreneurs contribute significantly to the growth of the economy by generating money, boosting productivity, and creating new jobs. Women's entrepreneurship therefore can empower individuals, improve rural women, and address other societal issues. To achieve sustainable development, women entrepreneurs can be well-positioned to play a significant role in promoting sustainable practices in the economy, social system, and ecosystem. In this study, it is examined how social, economic, and environmental practices are modified in business operations to influence the role of female entrepreneurs in sustainable development. Two hundred and fifty women entrepreneurs were chosen as the sample for this study, which is followed by a descriptive research study. Investigation of study variables was extended, using interviews also as a research instrument. The researcher's conclusion for the study by noting that women's entrepreneurship has a strong impact on the economy and development and how it can help developing countries advance sustainable business practices. Presently women are participating in entrepreneurship on a larger scale than in the past. They better educated and are knowledgeable about the subject. In an effort towards sustainable development, they currently facing a new set of obstacles. These businesses are economically sound, environmentally friendly, and socially responsible, which helps them in achieving their objectives. These companies emphasize doing business with the underprivileged, assisting the community to develop of skills and abilities, paying fair prices and receiving fair payments, supporting fair treatment of all employees, and promoting environmentally responsible business practices.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, sustainable development, women in business, economy, development*

Exploring the Role of Entrepreneurial Orientation and Innovation on Business Performance in the Tourism Industry

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Abstract

Tourism provides a major contribution to the economy of Eastern Province in Sri Lanka. The objective of the study is to examine how entrepreneurial orientation and innovation are related to business performance. The researchers used a structured questionnaire to interview 200 entrepreneurs to assess their entrepreneurial orientation, innovation, and business performance. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data. The study found a statistically significant positive correlation between entrepreneurial orientation and innovation ($r = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$). Further, both entrepreneurial orientation ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$) and innovation ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$) were significant predictors of business performance in the tourism industry. The study also found that the interaction between entrepreneurial orientation and innovation was significant ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.05$). Further, the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on business performance was stronger for entrepreneurs who exhibited higher levels of innovation. Based on the findings, the study suggests that tourist entrepreneurs focus on increasing their entrepreneurial and innovative capabilities to improve their business performance. This includes creating an innovative culture within their firms, creativity, and investing in research and development. Finally, the study recommends that future research investigate the relationship between other elements, such as marketing and networking, and business performance in the tourism industry.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Business growth, Sustainability, Tourism industry*

Growth of Spice Garden Entrepreneurs with Reference to Mathale District, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

As a major part of eco-tourism, agro-tourism is most beneficial to the community development of a developing country. Since the ancient period, Sri Lanka has been well-known for its agriculture-related practices. Mathale is a well-known tourist destination with rich natural and cultural heritage values. Mathale district can be identified as an attractive destination with high tourist value. This area is most famous among tourists for its spice gardens, which has resulted in high demand from tourists who want to experience authentic Sri Lankan culture. Therefore, as an objective, this study presented potential, opportunities, and challenges for the spice garden entrepreneurs in the Mathale district. This study followed the constructivism paradigm, is inductive in its approach, and practices qualitative explorations using in-depth interviews to generate effective results based on the grounded theory with the entrepreneurs who actively participated in the business. The researchers identified the potential for spice gardens to be promoted as a new trend to attract tourists, and they can be promoted as a niche concept within the country to attract tourists' attention. Less government involvement, unregistered spice gardens, climate changes, competition, and less income can be identified as major challenges to developing spice garden tourism. The researchers concluded the study with recommendations for spice garden entrepreneurs to increase their level of income by implementing new strategies such as the green product concept and enough consideration from the government authorities by implanting rules, regulations, and policies to maintain the quality and the standards of the existing spice garden business. As a result, the findings of the study can help all spice garden entrepreneurs to improve their businesses and seize new business opportunities in a developing country.

Keywords: *Eco Tourism, Entrepreneurship, Niche Tourism, Rural Tourism,*

Exploring the Potential of Community-based Women Entrepreneurship: A Case of Women Entrepreneurs in Handicraft Communities in Galle, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Community-based entrepreneurship (CEB) involves collaborative initiatives and shared decision-making among community members. It has the potential to enhance economic empowerment and preserve cultural heritage. It is considered as a promising solution to the livelihood development of small communities in developing countries. In recent days, entrepreneurship in women is understood as an emerging economic force that contributes to the economy's growth and development. The research focus on women entrepreneurs in community-based contexts is relatively new and limited in numbers. Small-scale industries such as handicrafts can play a major role in community development. The industry is spread throughout the country mainly in rural and urban areas, almost exclusively among women. This study explored and examined the opportunities for community-based women entrepreneurship within handicraft communities in Galle, Sri Lanka. The researcher utilized a qualitative research approach. The research involved conducting 20 interviews with handicraft women entrepreneurs living in Galle, Sri Lanka. The sample was selected using the purposive sampling technique. The results were analyzed employing the Thematic analysis. The findings of the study revealed that there are opportunities for community-based women entrepreneurship, and it is intertwined with the ongoing economic processes of the country. This approach presents several challenges that must be addressed for the sustainable development of Sri Lanka. The results will inform policymakers and stakeholders on how to support and promote community-based women entrepreneurship within the handicraft industry.

Keywords: *community-based entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurship, sustainable development, handicrafts*

Tourism Entrepreneurship in the Age of Experience Economy: A Study of Innovative Business Models and Consumer Engagement Strategies

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Abstract

Tourism entrepreneurship has experienced substantial changes in recent years due to the increased level of the experience economy. Consumers are no longer satisfied with typical products and services; instead, they seek out unique, memorable, and immersive experiences. As a result, tourist entrepreneurs must adapt to this new business environment through customer-involvement business models. This study aims to explore the innovative business models and consumer engagement strategies used by tourism entrepreneurs in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. This study adopts a qualitative research approach, using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to collect data. The sample consists of 100 entrepreneurs who have successfully established and managed tourism ventures in the region. The data collected is analyzed using SPSS. The findings of this study showed that tourism entrepreneurship in the experience economy era requires a significant shift from traditional business models and increased consumer engagement strategies. Successful entrepreneurs have created unique and engaging experiences that cater to current consumers' wants and expectations. Creativity, customer-centricity, technology, sustainability, and teamwork were identified as major successive factors criteria for new company models and consumer engagement tactics. The study also emphasizes the constraints of tourist entrepreneurship in the experience economy, such as intense competition and the necessity for ongoing innovation and adaptability. Accordingly, there are various recommendations to increase the sustainability and competitiveness of tourist activities. These include the need for greater collaboration between tourism entrepreneurs and local communities, the development of sustainable tourism products and services, the use of digital technologies to improve the visitor experience, and the requirement for tourism entrepreneurs to receive ongoing training and support to improve their business management skills. Furthermore, authorities and the tourist sector should collaborate to build a favourable regulatory framework to encourage tourism entrepreneurship and attract investment to the region.

Keywords: *Tourism entrepreneurship, Experience economy, Innovative business models, Consumer engagement strategies*

Case Study Analysis on Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

Post-COVID has opened new conditions for women entrepreneurs, categories in which women entrepreneurship in various directions has blossomed and women have taken those great avenues to sustain themselves, households, and communities during the COVID pandemic lockdown. Many people lost their daily livelihood, thus women under these circumstances took up the challenge to face this critical situation, e.g. the educational system was stalled but the technology was introduced for the purpose of education, and Zoom technology was utilized to carry on the said mentioned part, the sustenance of nutritional support for the family was also shouldered by most females in all communities, rural, urban alike. The non-availability of fuel and gas which are commonly used in both rural and urban households many were commissioned in preparing meals for their households and neighbouring communities (relations and friends). The challenges were a multitude in the mentioned process as the system collapsed the women (female) imagined entrepreneurs devised various methods to fulfill the above-mentioned targets. Those who had access to IT technology utilized for economic revenue and to improve, introduced their product or availability of their services online to one and all. Based on the situation this study aims to identify existing challenges and future opportunities in the industry. To achieve the objectives interviews and discussions were carried out among entrepreneurs. Qualitative analysis techniques were used for derived the findings of the study. The major challenge that they faced during the above set period was the non-availability of internet facilities to the majority of citizens. As the lockdown prevailed travelling was restricted, and banking facilities were not available to all to get a loan or get their deposits as all banks did not have online withdrawals or deposit systems. Postal services also were at a standstill which stalled even foreign remittance (forex) from their relatives or sponsors from other countries. Foreign countries were curtailed due to the global pandemic but after three years all new opportunities would have opened enough now. A new breed of varieties of female entrepreneurs has staged on and progressed with a firm footing but with all this talent, creativity, and commitment to further enhance their innovative enterprises. There are many challenges to be faced. Many of the rural female entrepreneurs who blossomed during the pandemic

period have unfortunately struggled or totally given up due to unavoidable circumstances. In the present system and non-recognition of these female entrepreneurs have mostly abandoned their entrepreneurs due to the monopoly of the able business class, e.g.: economic funding, tax rate, on loan lending institutes, and also legal patent right not time for them to market their product to the whole island and even the export market also the restrictions, placed on import to uplift their product or services, beautiness, spice trade and even pickle food items and cottage handloom industries are some of these challenges they have to face. “which reminds me of folk saying the flower blooming in the forest or jungle perish in the jungle but now there is a reason or proposal to pluck more women into all sectors, government or private industries, politics, and leading institute into play prominent rule either in decision making one or suitable post to utilize their creative knowhow to maximize the potential. In Sri Lanka most female entrepreneurs are in gender discriminated against. Some female entrepreneurs stand up for their rights. However, the legal system is solid grinds in a slow way and the stigma attached to such cases keeps many victims away then, the process of getting their own brand names for the products is also long tall. These challenges can be overcome if there is a genuine fostering move, women entrepreneurs by all these concerns and have the ability to resolve these mentioned challenging instances faced by us with the present economic crisis in the island. More domestic products created and manufactured by female industrialists should be circulated in the local market so that there won't be much expenditure and sustainable income for these female entrepreneurs for the export market language is a barrier in marketing their product overseas. Many divest new methods to see the smooth flow of daily life. Cottage industries, home gardens, and online business models were created and tested, and put into practice due to the economic situation of the period mentioned.

Keywords: *Female entrepreneur, community, household, jungle, product, challenge, post COVID*

Financial Literacy of Women Entrepreneurs and Business Growth: The case of Micro, Small and Medium Entrepreneurs (MSMEs) in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The financial literacy of women entrepreneurs in micro, small, and medium-sized businesses leads to difficulty in accessing economic opportunities for their business success and growth. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate how financial literacy affected the growth of micro, small, and medium-sized businesses owned and operated by women. The Research was conducted utilizing a survey methodology, and information was gathered from 320 female business owners around the country using a convenience sample strategy. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), the hypotheses established for the research were examined. AMOS 24.0 was utilized for the data analysis. According to the findings, a lack of financial knowledge among women entrepreneurs, particularly in the areas of money management, bookkeeping, risk management, credit and debt management, selection and use of financial products, and access to and use of financial information and advice, is a major reason for their inability to take their business to the next level. This means that women entrepreneurs must receive financial education, and ideally at a young age, so that they may develop the skills necessary to make wise financial decisions and seize lucrative business opportunities.

Keywords: *Financial literacy, Women entrepreneurs, Business Growth*

Exploring the Spirit of Entrepreneurship Among Gorkha Women: A Study in Ri-Bhoi, Meghalaya

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Abstract

The role of women in entrepreneurship has been the subject of much debate and attention in recent times, with many acknowledging their potential to contribute significantly to economic development. However, the entrepreneurial spirit and opportunities available to Gorkha women in Meghalaya, a state in northeast India, have received limited research attention. This paper seeks to address this gap by exploring the opportunities and challenges that Gorkha women face in pursuing entrepreneurship at the grassroots level. The study was conducted using a mixed-methods approach; combining primary data collected from a sample of 100 Gorkha women aged 18-25, and secondary data sources such as existing literature, governmental website, articles, and journals on the topic. The findings reveal that Gorkha women have a strong desire to start their own businesses but face multiple barriers such as family pressure, financial constraints, cultural barriers, and negative perceptions towards entrepreneurship. To promote Gorkha women's entrepreneurship, the study recommends the provision of government training programs, practical exposure, and family support. These findings are of significant relevance to policymakers, entrepreneurs, and development organizations interested in advancing gender equality and economic development in regions like Meghalaya. The paper concludes that empowering Gorkha women entrepreneurs can contribute significantly to the region's economic growth, social welfare, and gender equality.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, economic development. Gender equality, opportunity, region, study, contribute significantly*

Women in Tourism: New Path of Action

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Abstract

Sri Lanka's tourism industry has proven its potential for economic growth and resilience. This study focuses on the labour market participation of women in the tourism industry, with a specific emphasis on Sri Lanka and reforms to step up efforts to make an impactful transformation for inclusive growth. The study finds in Sri Lanka, women are highly underrepresented in the tourism sector, with only 7% employed in the industry despite making up 52% of the population. It also identifies various factors that discourage women from pursuing employment in tourism, such as poor job titles, low wages, limited career prospects, and lack of awareness about available opportunities. Issues of work-life balance, gender-based violence, sexual harassment, and cultural stigmas further hinder female representation. The finding suggests the benefits of the industry are not equally distributed between men and women. The study recommends a stronger focus on strategies for inclusive growth, including awareness campaigns, constant human capital development, financial literacy for women-led businesses, and technological advancements. Collaboration among government bodies, industry stakeholders, and communities is essential to address these challenges. The involvement of women in planning and implementing national tourism strategies is crucial, along with the promotion of role models and challenging stereotypes. The study was conducted based on primary and secondary data with comparative and descriptive analysis.

Keywords: *Women in tourism, inclusive growth, reforms, strategies, stereotypes*

A Holistic Approach of Investigation on Women Empowerment in Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The United Nations World Tourism Organization's Global Report on Women in Tourism (2019) defined 'Women Empowerment' as, allowing women to control their lives, accessibility to resources, leadership opportunities, and equality rights. The International Labour Organization (2020) stated, 10% of women represent the Sri Lanka tourism industry and showcased the 14th largest gender gap with a majority of economically inactive women. The aim of the study is to construct a holistic empowering framework for women in Sri Lanka tourism. The holistic empowering framework is segregated into five major themes. Employment: decent workplaces for women, Entrepreneurship: economically stimulating women's' tourism businesses, Education: promoting tourism education and training, Leadership: female representation in tourism decision-making, and Community: avoid inequalities in households and societies. A conceptual framework was formulated by obtaining insights into sociocultural, and economic factors influencing the status of women in tourism. As the methodology, a qualitative approach was applied to examine the subject matter. A focus group discussion method was utilized to collect and analyze data. The study group included female stakeholders from Sri Lankan tourism sector, including hoteliers, academics, government officials, and women entrepreneurs. In-depth interviews illustrated their educational backgrounds, experiences, recommendations, and constraints related to women' empowerment. Findings revealed that the current chaotic situation occurred due to gender discrimination, sexual objectification, lower wages, under-skilled, and workplace harassment, which constrained women from entering the industry. The discussion introduced theme-wise insights as follows: Offer career development through promotions, mentoring, and continuous on-job training, expand easy market access and financial aids to diversify women's tourism productions, promote tourism training on English language, soft skills, and ICT, Encourage women's participation within public and private sector tourism entities and senior management positions, and Conduct awareness and recruitment campaigns across rural communities. Proper implementation of these findings will certainly empower Sri Lankan women in tourism.

Keywords: *Women empowerment, Decent workplace for Women, Women entrepreneurship*

Factors Contributing to Glass Ceiling in State Universities: Evidence from Western Province

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Abstract

Women's labour force involvement has expanded dramatically around the world. The ratio between the women workforce and the women managerial positions has resulted in a stronger effort to explore on women workforce. The concept of the glass ceiling on women's academics was selected to study the factors that contribute and their relationship to the glass ceiling. Despite a higher academic representation at faculties, there are only a handful of administrative positions. The research focused on two independent variables such as stereotyping and work-life balance. Stereotyping was determined by the image portrayed as a team worker, good communicator and level of commitment. Work-life balance on the other hand was established by evaluating elements such as support from family, level of family responsibilities and work satisfaction. The study objectives were to test the existence or non-existence of the glass ceiling and to establish a relationship between factors contributing to it. The study was correlational, and it was conducted in a non-contrived environment, where it was analytical in nature. Data for the study was gathered from three State universities in the Western province. They were selected to cover a higher percentage of the academic staff and women academics who have completed a service level of five years in the Faculty of Management were considered for the study. The primary data source was the structured questionnaire, from which the univariate and bivariate analysis was conducted. In the analysis of the study, it was revealed that glass ceiling among the senior women academics existed to a certain extent in a mild form. Based on the empirical evidence of the study both factors contributing to the glass ceiling demonstrated a positive correlation, whereas stereotyping signified a higher positive correlation to the glass ceiling. Enhancing the skills of women academics in teamwork and improving commitment would help reduce the impacts of the glass ceiling in the State universities of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Glass ceiling, senior women academics, stereotyping, work-life balance*

Influence of Russian Tourist Market on Women's Empowerment in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The tourism industry, previously a significant source of foreign exchange for Sri Lanka, has witnessed a shift in tourist demographics following the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war. Russian tourists have increasingly chosen Sri Lanka as a preferred destination, with arrivals reaching nearly 100,000 visitors this year, making it the second-largest inbound market after Indian tourists. The repeat visits from Russian tourists indicate an improvement in Sri Lanka's destination image and increased loyalty, suggesting a growing attachment between Russian tourists and the country. This study focused on investigating the factors influencing women's empowerment by Russian Tourists. A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing a survey questionnaire administered to 324 tourists visiting Sri Lanka. Non-probability sampling, specifically the snowball method, was employed to select respondents. The questionnaire included multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended questions, aiming to explore the perceptions and experiences of Russian tourists in Sri Lanka. Russian tourists exhibit a fondness and respect for Sri Lankan culture, particularly traditional attire such as the Saree. Furthermore, Russian visitors contribute significantly to the local economy by purchasing Sri Lankan products, including Ceylon Tea, which Russia and the CIS countries are the largest buyers of. Sales and promotional activities often involve employing women in various sectors, such as gem, spice, Ayurveda, clothing, and souvenir shops. This has led to an increased demand for Russian language skills among sales girls, creating more job opportunities and entrepreneurial prospects for women. The influx of Russian tourists has not only benefited the hospitality industry, but also extended to other sectors, including local travel agencies, where women with Russian education backgrounds find employment as tour operators. The wellness sector has also experienced a surge in demand, providing further employment opportunities for women. However, it is important to note that the imposition of sanctions has had an impact on the financial aspects of the Russian tourist market in Sri Lanka, with visa card transactions from Russia being blocked. This factor warrants consideration in future analyses of the Russian tourist market's influence on women's empowerment in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Russian tourist market, women's empowerment, job opportunities, cultural exchange, entrepreneurship*

Women Entrepreneurs in Cosmetic Industry

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Abstract

Women entrepreneurship is the process of a woman or a group of women initiating, leading, managing, and developing an enterprise while generating employment opportunities to improve the quality of living of more families. Women entrepreneurs play a significant role in the economy of the country. According to the Chamber of Cosmetics Industry, there are more than 30,000 salons and 15,000 cosmetic outlets in Sri Lanka. 300,000 - 450,000 individuals are employed in the cosmetic industry and the majority are women. Previous research has revealed that entrepreneurship is challenging for women due to structural barriers and gender-specific constraints. But while most women entrepreneurs struggle to balance family and self-employment relationships, the cosmetic industry provides a variety of professional roles for women to develop economically, independently, and flexibly as entrepreneurs. This survey was conducted to identify the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Cosmetic Industry and to suggest potential solutions. A questionnaire was given to randomly selected 60 women entrepreneurs aged between 25 to 60 years of age and they were interviewed to collect the data. Analysis revealed that 83.3% of them were doing their business to support their family while 16.67% mentioned it as an additional income. The majority of them had acquired their professional knowledge and skills, but they didn't have a clear knowledge of the rules and regulations in the cosmetic industry. Analyzed data revealed that they lacked knowledge of business management, finance handling, and marketing. 91.6% of the women stated that the previously allocated import ban on products and the economic crisis have hugely affected their revenue generation. Other challenges they mentioned were lack of capital and financial support, social-cultural barriers, and competition. Considering the analysis, suggestions can be produced to facilitate financial support by providing loans with low interest, knowledge-sharing workshops on business management, and awareness program on rules and regulations. With standard training programs and guidance, women entrepreneurs will be able to fill the recruitment of professionals worldwide and empower the economy of the country.

Keywords: *Women entrepreneurship, cosmetic industry, Challenges, Empower*

Asymmetric Contribution of Women in Aviation Industry

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Abstract

Aviation is considered one of the primary requirements for many fields in the present-day context. However, due to various direct and indirect factors such as higher investments; cost factors; and having a high-end customer base due to its connections to other high-end industries as a complementary industry, aviation has been recognized as an expensive operation among other sectors. Hence, the companies are very serious about the best and optimum productivity for their investments where the outputs of employees become very important as well. However, the obsolete notion that argues about ‘men having higher physical strengths as compared to that of women’, still continues to have effects on the low trends of acceptance of women into the aviation sector as employees. While it could be accepted that there may be benefits when men are employed in certain job roles which require direct physical-strength-related skills such as labor, this paper attempts to present a research outcome to establish the major contribution of women as compared to that of men in the total job-role domain of the aviation industry. The word ‘Asymmetric’ in the topic refers to the benefits and opportunity costs of women being employed in the job roles of the aviation industry over men employees. In other words, it refers to the extraneous advantages when women hold job roles in the aviation industry as compared to that men. While both men and women can play these job roles, the research has been able to establish the fact that more advantages could be extracted from the majority of job roles within the total domain, if they could be held by women as their natural characteristics in a general match with these job roles. This research was conducted through a quantitative analysis by identifying clusters of employees and customers both in the international and domestic aviation sectors. Additionally, it also gave a better weightage to the opinions of industry experts. To begin with, the research identified the most important characteristics and factors of employees from a general point of view that could contribute largely to the productivity of operations. Thereafter, through the same methodology, the research also recognized the difference in the contribution of men and women toward these attributes. A few, examples of such attributes are; the aviation sector always prioritizes the ‘safety’ and

‘Risk-avoidance’. Moreover, customer service through ‘welcoming attitudes’ and ‘ushering’ have been very important to this sector where women employees by far have been better. The accuracy of work and reluctance towards breach of rules and regulations are a few more other advantages that research was able to identify to substantiate the fact that women's employments are more effective. One of the highlighted findings during the research was, that women in the aviation industry, also become a trademark for the operator companies. Advertising the airlines with cabin-crew women is a good example of this factor. The Customer preferences are more towards they have been served by women immaterial of what the job role is. As a whole, while nearly half of the total job-role cluster could be handled by any gender, women have been found as more suitable for the majority of the rest of the job roles. The above findings also revealed that, while women could be more effective in a majority of job roles in the aviation sector, it is important for the operating companies to maintain a gender balance within organizations while giving high weightage to women.

Keywords: *Women, aviation, women employment*

Influential Factors to Build Economic Resilience of Women Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

Cities are highly vulnerable and espouse various shocks. The shock can divide into a few categories namely global economic shocks, sectoral industry shocks, and other shocks. This impacts all industries. However, most of the research highlighted tourism industry is more sensitive and highly exposed to external or internal shocks. Tourism destinations and various types of businesses are operating to provide services to tourists. However, from time to time various impacts directly influence the business. In 2019 travel and tourism's global GDP contribution was 10.4% and in 2020 reduced up to 5.5%. Further, Due to this from 2019 to 2020 62M employment opportunities were lost, 272 million employments were leaving the sector globally. In the past few years, Sri Lanka has faced numerous shocks from time to time and this directly influences the business operating in tourism cities. Women entrepreneurs are highly vulnerable due to the sensitivity of the industry as well as they have family responsibilities. Economic resilience is an important application and it is explained the ability of an economy to respond to hazards and disturbances, including inherent capabilities that enable communities to avoid negative impacts improve adaptive capacity to change the situation, and maintain economic standards of living. Therefore, this research identified factors that influence to build their resilience in the future and the way of ensuring sustainability. Reviewing journals, case studies, and books identified factors that influence resilience building in women entrepreneurs. Based on the analysis prioritize an important factor. Finally identified five main factors namely Networking, Deep pockets, innovations, capacity building, and business assets. Further, this study identifies the gap in the resilience cycle based on the identified factors. This will help to identify a resilience-building framework in future the to develop their capacities within the cycle.

Keywords: *Economic resilience, Women Entrepreneur, Shocks, Tourism Industry*



Women's Career Advancement and Economic Development

Inclusiveness or Exclusiveness of Women in National Land Development Policies and Practices of Sri Lanka with Special Reference to Eastern Province: A Post-war Development Perspective

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Abstract

Development is based on the provision of long-lived healthy lives and the ability to acquire resources to live a quality life from generation to generation. Various projects have been implemented based on women as the main agents in development, especially in developing countries. Empowerment of women on material resources and women's material possessions provides status, protection, and dignity to them. In this regard, land becomes a major factor in women's economic empowerment and well-being. Women in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka have been the owners of land-based assets and used the land as a means of economic development before the war. Hence, the loss of land-based assets in the post-war context of women who achieved well-being through land questions their economic strength of them. Although women were included in the post-war development initiatives in the Eastern province, specifically programs related to the development of such landless women were not implemented. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the current well-being of landless women in Batticaloa of Eastern Province, Sri Lanka, where the post-war development projects have been implemented by using qualitative research methods. A purposive sampling technique was used for this study and the sample size is 25. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were carried out to collect primary data and a thematic analysis method was used for data analysis. The study identified that women have been excluded from land-related development activities in the post-war development context. Discrimination in land distribution after the war excludes women from direct participation in land-related economic activities. As a result, women are facing severe poverty, economic deprivation, and social exclusion. Since land is considered the right and resource of women, this study strongly advocates that women involved in the land-based economy should be prioritized while incorporating women in development.

Keywords: *Exclusion, Inclusion, Land Policies & Practices, Post-war Development, Women.*

An analysis of Factors Influencing on Women Participation in Local Tourism: A Case of Kalpitiya, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The ancient theory of travel is now widespread as tourism in today's consumerist society. People travel to various places for rejuvenation of their physical condition, for a change from the daily monotony of life, to discover new places, besides their curiosity in learning and experiencing the new in distinct places from the point of view of the natural environment, culture, and heritage. The 21st century has seen more movement of people across the world to find out and experience the tourist attractions of various places. The tourism industry is one other area that has likely to expand and develop in the next years in Sri Lanka. As per Sri Lanka's Tourism Development Strategy of, the tourism sector is anticipated to designate a leading foreign exchange earner by means of 2030. The main objective of this research is to discover aspects that influence women's contribution and non-contribution in the hospitality sector in Kalpitiya Pradeshiya Sabha Local Authority area in Sri Lanka. Particularly this research used a qualitative method, and primary information was composed through a self-structured questionnaire method. The sample size was sixty women, comprising thirty women who contributed in the hospitality sector and thirty women who had not contributed to the hospitality sector, who were randomly chosen. Outcomes were investigated using the descriptive statistics method. The outcomes discovered that the variances in linguistic assistance and problem-solving methods had noteworthy consequences on women's contribution to the hospitality sector. Also, childcare concerns and the absence of knowledge affected women's contribution to this industry. The outcomes also exposed that most of the non-hospitality labourers have linguistic issues, poor knowledge about the tourism sector, and an absence of chances to involve in the tourism sector. As per the outcomes, 53.8 % of thirty non-hospitality labourers had a purpose to be contributed in the tourism sector and hospitality sector in the future, but the enduring 46.2 % had a poor intention to be contributed.

Keywords: *Tourism industry, women's participation, hospitality, linguistic, knowledge*

Promoting Women's Inclusivity in Tourism: Evidence from Eastern Province of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This paper explores the issues relating to raising awareness of inclusiveness and opportunities for women in the tourism sector. The specific objective of this study is to investigate the current state of women's participation in inclusive tourism and identify the key factors that promote women's inclusiveness in tourism in the case of Eastern Province, Sri Lanka. The tourism industry reflects a wide gap between women's inclusiveness initiatives and their desire for inclusion in tourism. Women can be very supportive as well as useful to the tourism sector, especially considering the percentage of gender composition in the population where women can prove an imperative link to empowerment initiatives. If women's inclusiveness initiatives are created, the tourism sector can be further strengthened. However, there are several challenges to women's inclusiveness when looking at the tourism point of view. This wide gap often intensifies with the lack of training and capacity-building initiatives and a lack of overall knowledge about opportunities deriving from the tourism sector. This study used a mixed-methods approach, including a survey of 150 women working in the tourism business and interviews with key stakeholders. A self-administered survey was conducted to collect quantitative data, while stakeholders were interviewed to collect qualitative data. The analysis was carried out based on the data from 150 women working in the tourism business in Eastern Province. The data were examined using descriptive and inferential statistics such as chi-square tests, t-tests, and multiple regression analysis. According to the study findings, women in the Eastern Province experience a number of impediments to effective engagement in the tourism business, including restricted access to education and training opportunities, gender discrimination, and a lack of finance. Women, on the other hand, expressed a great desire to contribute to the business and identified possible growth areas, such as community-based tourism and eco-tourism. Women's inclusiveness includes initiatives linking women with comprehensive capacity building, community development, entrepreneurship, and leadership development programs that support stability and sustainability and help women's empowerment. Interviews with key stakeholders indicated the necessity of increasing support and investment in women's education and entrepreneurship, as well as eliminating gender-based

discrimination and encouraging sustainable tourism practices. Hence, a need for appropriate vocational training and skill development training specially designed for women is considered an extreme inevitability. These comprehensive initiatives can guarantee the long-term stability and sustainability envisioned by the tourism sector.

Keywords: *Women, Inclusive Tourism, Eastern Province, Sri Lanka.*

Women's Contribution in Economic Recovery and Gender-Sensitive Economic Recover Policies: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

Women's contributions to economic recovery and prosperity had gained increasing recognition in recent years. This empirical analysis focused on Sri Lanka's efforts to restore and expand its economy after a period of political and social upheaval, highlighting the significance of women's role in this process. The study aimed to examine how women contributed to Sri Lanka's economic recovery and identified the socio-demographic and economic factors that influenced their involvement. A quantitative research methodology was used, utilizing a cross-sectional design and stratified random sampling technique to select 500 participants. Data was collected through structured surveys, and descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. The results indicated that employment status and education level significantly predicted women's contribution to economic recovery in Sri Lanka ($p < 0.05$). The majority of participants fell between the age range of 25-45 years, with 55% being married and 60% having lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the study investigated the impact of gender-sensitive economic recovery strategies on women's employment outcomes. Using data from the Labour Force Survey conducted between the first quarter of 2019 and the first quarter of 2021, the analysis assessed the effectiveness of policies such as cash transfers, job training, and tax incentives, particularly in sectors severely affected by the pandemic, such as travel and tourism. The research revealed that financial transfers had the greatest impact, resulting in a 5.7% increase in employment rates for women recipients. Job training programs and tax incentives also significantly improved women's employment outcomes, with respective employment rate increases of 3.2% and 2.8%. The study emphasized the influence of factors like access to childcare and educational opportunities on the effectiveness of these policies. Gender-sensitive policies proved more beneficial surrounding for women who had access to childcare services and higher levels of education. Therefore, enacting laws that promoted women's employment and addressed specific challenges they faced, such as unequal access to childcare and education, was crucial. Gender-sensitive policies, including cash transfers, job training, and tax incentives, were essential for supporting Sri Lanka's economic recovery while promoting women's employment opportunities.

Keywords: *Sri Lanka, gender-sensitive policy, economic recovery, women's employment, and difference-in-differences*

Evaluating the Digital Skill of Female Secondary School Teachers in Garo Hills, Meghalaya

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to find the digital skill of female secondary school teachers in Garo Hills, Meghalaya, and to check if there is any significant difference in the skill level among the teachers working under Government, Deficit, Adhoc and Private with the objectives (i) to find the digital skill level of female secondary school teachers (ii) to check the difference of digital skill level of female secondary school teachers. This study will help to find the present digital skill level of teachers in the Garo Hills so that the professional development of teachers could be planned accordingly to promote women's empowerment. The digital skills of female secondary school teachers in the Garo Hills are mediated by many factors including access to technology, skills, and personal attitudes. The purpose of this survey was to identify the current digital skill level of the teaching community in relation to the use of basic digital tools. The objectives of this study are to find out the digital skill level of women secondary school teachers and compare the digital skill levels of teachers in different categories of schools. For this study, a questionnaire-based survey method is used. By using a random sampling method, the schools were identified. After informing and receiving the permission of the Head of the institute, a semi-structured questionnaire prepared by the researcher is distributed to the teachers in selected schools. All the teachers of the secondary and higher secondary schools are included as respondents. The questionnaire items were prepared based on the DigCom framework, prepared by International Telecommunication Union. The sample data consisted of 765 respondents from 83 randomly selected schools. The study revealed that Female teachers have a mean rank that is better than the mean rank of male teachers which shows that the digital skill of female teachers is better than that of male teachers. But this result is not satisfactory because their average skill level is below the average skill level of teachers in other areas.

Keywords: *digital skill, teachers' digital skill level, digital competence, ICT, twenty-first century skill*

Digital Payments for Tourism sites and its impact on Women Street Food Vendors: An Exploratory Study in Puducherry

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Abstract

In recent years, the great affinity for adopting new technologies by small businesses and street vendors of Puducherry has transformed the way commercial transactions are conducted at tourism destinations. Digital payment methods have transformed the way tourism vendors conducted transactions in India. They have facilitated convenience, expanded customer reach, improved financial management, and enhanced security. While some challenges remain, the long-term impact of digital payments on street food vendors is likely to be positive, but in the short term, it seems as a critical obstacle for small-scale vendors who have no financial or educational background to be in line with the technology. This study explores whether the adoption of digital payments at the major tourism sites of Puducherry is an advantage or disadvantage for the women street food vendors of the destination. An exploratory qualitative study through purposive sampling was conducted among the women street food vendors of the destination. An in-depth semi-structured interview was conducted to collect data for the study. The data collected was analyzed by thematic analysis. Themes and sub-themes were identified from the data to conceptualize the discussion. The results obtained reveal that there is increased adoption of digital transactions by small businesses and women's street food vendors at the tourist sites of Puducherry. The expansion of digital payments at this destination is considered a boon to the major women's street food vendors of the destination compared to its disadvantage. The study also discloses the significance of cashless transactions in the fast-developing technological world and highlights the advantages of digital payments like their cost-effectiveness, eco-friendliness, technological convenience, and paperless, faceless, contactless transaction nature with minimal physical intervention. The study identified digital payments as a secure and swift mechanism for women entrepreneurs in particular

Keywords: *Digital Payments, Commercial Transactions, Street Vendors, Women Entrepreneurs*

Exploring the Role of Wellness Tourism in Empowering Women for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development of the Tourism Industry in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Wellness tourism, which includes activities and experiences that promote health, well-being, and relaxation, has developed as a quickly expanding segment of the global tourist business. The island nation of Sri Lanka, which is renowned for its stunning natural surroundings, extensive cultural legacy, and ancient medical traditions, has come to see the potential of wellness tourism as an engine for inclusive growth and sustainable development within its tourist sector. In the Sri Lankan tourist sector, this study explores the role of wellness tourism in empowering women for inclusive growth and sustainable development. It is crucial to look at options that advance gender equality, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability as the nation works to improve its standing as a well-liked tourism destination. The objective of this study is to find out how wellness travel may help sustainable development in Sri Lanka, inclusive growth, and the empowerment of women. A mixed-methods approach is used in the study, which also includes case studies of effective efforts, analysis of available data and reports, and qualitative interviews with key stakeholders. The research findings show how wellness travel has the potential to empower women in Sri Lanka and open up new economic opportunities. It outlines many opportunities for women to actively engage in and gain from the wellness tourism industry, such as through entrepreneurship, leadership positions, and skill development. In order to include gender equality, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability into wellness tourism plans in Sri Lanka, the research will offer suggestions and guidelines for policymakers, tourist authorities, and stakeholders. This study intends to aid in the building of a healthy and sustainable wellness tourist business in Sri Lanka that empowers women, encourages inclusive growth, and advances the industry's overall sustainable development objectives.

Keywords: *Wellness Tourism, Women Empowerment, Inclusive Growth, Sustainable Development*

Study of Challenges for Female Employees in Hotel Industry: Evidence from Four Star Hotels in Colombo

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Abstract

Sri Lankan women have made significant contributions to the hotel industry in the country, but they still face various challenges that limit their potential. This is particularly true in the capital city of Colombo, where many 4-star hotels operate and are a vital part of the local economy. One of the significant challenges facing Sri Lankan women in the hotel industry, particularly in 4-star hotels in Colombo, is a lack of gender diversity in leadership roles. Despite progress in recent years, women are still underrepresented in senior management positions, which can limit their ability to influence decision-making and create more opportunities for other women. This lack of representation can create a homogenous work environment that may be less inclusive of diverse perspectives and experiences. Another challenge faced by Sri Lankan women in the hotel industry, especially in 4-star hotels in Colombo, is the lack of work-life balance. The hotel industry is known for its demanding schedules, long working hours, and work on weekends and holidays. This can make it challenging for women with family responsibilities to manage their work and personal obligations. It may also limit their ability to access professional development and training opportunities, further impacting their career growth. Moreover, gender-based discrimination and harassment are significant challenges faced by women in the hotel industry, including in 4-star hotels in Colombo. Women may face stereotypes, biases, or prejudice due to their gender. This discrimination can lead to unequal pay, limited access to training and development opportunities, and fewer opportunities for career advancement. Furthermore, Sri Lankan women in the hotel industry, particularly in 4-star hotels in Colombo, may face challenges related to their safety and security. In the hotel industry, women often work in isolated areas and may be vulnerable to harassment or violence. This can create a stressful and unsafe work environment that may negatively impact women's mental and physical health. Despite these challenges, some 4-star hotels in Colombo have implemented policies and initiatives to promote gender equality and empower women in the workforce. These efforts include creating supportive work environments, offering flexible work arrangements,

and providing training and development opportunities. Additionally, some hotels have partnered with local organizations to support women's economic empowerment and career development. However, more needs to be done to create an inclusive and equitable work environment for women in the 4-star hotel industry in Colombo. One way to achieve this is through policies that promote gender diversity in leadership roles. Companies can implement strategies such as gender quotas or diversity targets to encourage the hiring and promotion of women in senior management positions. Another way to promote gender equality in the hotel industry is through the provision of work-life balance policies. Companies can offer flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting or job sharing, to support women with family responsibilities. This can create a better work-life balance, improve employee satisfaction, and enhance employee retention. Moreover, companies in the hotel industry can take steps to prevent gender-based discrimination and harassment. This can include implementing anti-discrimination policies, providing training to employees on appropriate behaviour and practices, and creating channels for reporting and addressing complaints. Additionally, hotels can invest in safety and security measures to protect women in the workforce. This can include installing security cameras, providing escorts for employees working late shifts, and creating a culture of safety and respect in the workplace. In conclusion, Sri Lankan women have made significant contributions to the hotel industry, including in 4-star hotels in Colombo. However, they still face various challenges, such as a lack of gender diversity in leadership roles, a lack of work-life balance, gender-based discrimination and harassment, and safety and security concerns. To create an inclusive and equitable work environment, companies in the hotel industry need to implement policies and initiatives that promote gender equality and empower women in the workforce. This can lead to a more diverse, productive, and innovative workforce

Keywords: *Female Contribution, Hotel, Gender Equity, Sri Lanka , Gender-based discrimination*

Challenges of Women in Tourism Careers

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Abstract

Women's employment in the tourism industry displays a respectful role where there is a high value in the industry for women who engage in tourism. The tourism authorities encourage women in selecting careers in the tourism industry. Even though there is positive encouragement from the industry, the career development of women in tourism is quite challenging. This study attempts at discussing the challenges faced by women in tourism careers and suggests career development approaches to empower women in the industry. There are three specific objectives of the study, to define the areas of women's enrolment in the tourism industry, to identify the challenges faced by women who are engaged in the tourism industry, and to suggest a sustainable approach for the career development of women in the tourism industry. A mixed method was utilized to gather data and they were quantitatively analysed using SPSS software. Women's entrepreneurship development, tourism education, community acceptance of tourism, and women's leadership in tourism are identified as key facets to face the most challenges of women in tourism. Further, cultural barriers, economic barriers, and gender barriers were identified in the study. Approaches for the mitigation of challenges and developing an attractive employment environment for women in the tourism industry in Sri Lanka were proposed. The best practices of women in tourism employment were defined comparatively in the recommendations.

Keywords: *Women employment in tourism, career development challenges, women empowerment*

Identification of Factors Effecting Women Employee Turnover in Hotel Industry

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Abstract

The hospitality industry is classified as a service sector since it offers services to its visitors. To handle and meet customer demands, the industry needs labour. The industry is labour-intensive and hires both male and female laborers. As a competitive industry, the tourism industry faces many challenges all over the world. Employee turnover has become part of the industry's challenge to retain and employ a new workforce. Because it costs more to hire new workers than retain current workers in the hotel industry. In the workforce of the hotel sector, women play a significant role by possessing various positions. However, they are not continuing in the industry and turnover is high. Clear facts have been unavailable regarding reasons for women's employee turnover in the industry and how to mitigate this challenge. The present study highlights the factors affecting women's employee turnover in the hotel industry and identifies possibilities of minimizing those factors and retaining women employees in the field. The ultimate goal of this study is to boost hotel profits by effectively retaining female staff members. To perform this study the secondary data were collected from relevant journals and online databases. By referring to the previous studies, the most significant factors affecting women turnover in the hotel industry were the lowest salary levels of women employees, the difficulty in achieving carrier progress, the lack of welfare services, social problems, and working time issues. It has the possibility to minimize these factors to enhance the women's employee workforce in the hotel industry.

Keywords: *Women employee, Turnover, Profit, Factors, minimize*

Exploring the Gender Wage Gap: Catalyzing Inclusive Economic Growth in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The gender wage gap is a persistent issue affecting societies worldwide, with significant implications for inclusive economic growth. This study aims to explore the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to the gender wage gap, considering its impact on achieving inclusive economic growth in Sri Lanka. The research begins by examining the concept of the gender wage gap, defined as the disparity in earnings between men and women performing similar work. Various factors contributing to the gender wage gap are identified, including occupational segregation, discrimination, and differences in work experience and education. These factors perpetuate unequal pay scales and hinder progress toward achieving gender equality. Furthermore, this study investigates the consequences of the gender wage gap on inclusive economic growth. It explores how the wage gap limits women's economic opportunities, perpetuates income inequality, and hampers overall productivity. The implications for poverty rates, household income, and wealth accumulation are also analyzed, highlighting the far-reaching impact of the gender wage gap on society as a whole. To address this issue, the study explores potential solutions and policy interventions that can promote more equitable wages and foster inclusive economic growth. These include implementing pay transparency measures, promoting equal access to education and training, enhancing workplace policies and flexibility, and challenging gender stereotypes and biases. Overall, this study underscores the urgent need to address the gender wage gap as a crucial step toward achieving inclusive economic growth. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to inform policymakers, organizations, and society at large. By closing the gender wage gap, societies can promote greater economic equality, enhance productivity, and foster a more inclusive and sustainable future for all.

Keywords: *Gender wage gap, inclusive economic growth, discrimination, work experience, equal access to education.*

Under-Representation of Women in Upper Management in Outbound Travel Industry in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Due to the constant continuous battle women face while pursuing the corporate ladder into upper positions in the workplace, it has become necessary to assess the degree of possibility for this within the workplaces in Sri Lanka so as to try and understand what these barriers are and how to overcome them. The following research study has been designed in order to investigate this important issue, “The Glass Ceiling effect” which still prevails in many organizations in Sri Lanka. The Travel industry of the country which is a very vibrant and important industry has been selected to conduct this research. The core objective of this study is to identify the barriers which prevail and have an impact on female participation in senior management positions and to identify the most salient factor which affects the under-representation of women in the upper management positions of the outbound travel agencies in Sri Lanka. The research was conducted by taking into account the main travel agencies in Sri Lanka. Thereafter secondary as well as primary research has been conducted in order to critically analyze the “Glass Ceiling Effect” in the Travel sector. Following an extensive literature review, the researcher has identified five main barriers that could have a negative impact on the career progression of women. Those identified categories are Individual factors, Family factors, Organizational factors, Psychological factors, and Societal/Cultural factors. These categories are further subcategorized into twenty-one dimensions for an in-depth identification of the barricades that have restricted women from advancing into senior positions. In order to gather the required data for the research, a survey was distributed to the selected sample. The outcomes of the study showed that all the above five factors have a parallel impact on the career progression of female employees in the Traveling industry of Sri Lanka. Conclusively, based

on the results derived through the analysis, a series of quality solutions were recommended in order to reduce the “Glass Ceiling Effects” in the Traveling industry such as Initiate work/life and family-friendly policies in the organizational level, focusing on government action to break glass ceiling barriers. Thus it will be beneficial for female employees for succession and career advancement and for businesses to restore the balance of gender while achieving greater competitiveness in the vibrant business environment.

Keywords: *Women under representation, Glass Ceiling Effect, Work from home*



Women's Empowerment and Sustainability

Evaluating Women's Empowerment Programs in Sri Lanka: A Case Study of the Nuwara Eliya District

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Abstract

Women's empowerment is recognized as a catalyst for driving economic development. However, empirical data on women's empowerment and the effectiveness of women's empowerment programs in Sri Lanka are limited. The success of women's empowerment initiatives should be assessed by considering various contextual factors and circumstances. This study focuses on the Nuwara Eliya district, where 13 in-depth interviews were conducted with women who participated in women's empowerment programs, specifically those with a tourism focus, over the past 12 months. The study evaluates the impact of women's empowerment programs implemented by the Sri Lankan government and those funded by local and international agencies. Many of these programs followed a top-down approach to fulfil funders' objectives rather than addressing the needs and requirements of the target groups. The majority of development plans do not include the impact of community empowerment programs that might be put in place. Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate current strategies and identify gaps in women's empowerment programs to facilitate their effectiveness. The findings reveal nine major factors that hinder the success of these programs, highlighting the significant gap in women's empowerment in the Nuwara Eliya district. The government should assume a pivotal role, ensuring easy access to financial assistance, fostering community acceptance of women's empowerment, improving education, promoting sustainable development of entrepreneurial skills, facilitating social and cultural support, and focusing program objectives explicitly on women's empowerment rather than hidden agendas.

Keywords: *Women empowerment, women's empowerment programs, sustainable development, community empowerment*

Women Empowerment in Digital Era: Review of Literature and Future Research Directions

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Abstract

Women form almost half of the world's population and a substantial portion of the labor force. Digitalization has touched every aspect of the human world, with an emphasis on the empowerment of women. To fully engage women in economic life and achieve sustainable growth on a global scale, women's empowerment is a vital objective. Women's integration and participation in sustainable development are viewed as beginning points for women's empowerment. This conceptual paper aims to review the literature pertaining to the empowerment of women in the digital age and recommend future research directions. This article examines how the empowerment of women in the digital world contributes to sustainable economic growth. A desk research strategy has been used in this study. Using the journal articles found in the Emerald, Taylor & Francis, and JSTOR databases, a structured literature evaluation was undertaken, and closely relevant papers were selected for the study. There is a dearth of studies on the relationship between women's empowerment and digitization, as well as the contribution of women's empowerment to economic development. Women's ability to participate in economic development has been hindered by their lack of knowledge and skills in digital technologies, which is a consequence of Industry 4.0, the fourth industrial revolution. Digital technology is a potent tool that facilitates economic expansion. Digital technologies have played a significant role in the advancement of women and created prospects for their empowerment. Women's empowerment is crucial for accelerating economic expansion. The economic empowerment of women is now seen as a prerequisite for a nation's advancement.

Keywords: *woman empowerment, digitalization, industry 4.0, economic development*

Need Analysis of Women Empowerment for Sustainable Development of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This research investigates the topic of "Women Empowerment for Sustainable Development in a Nation" within the context of Sri Lanka. The primary objective is to explore the extent to which advancing women's empowerment and gender equality can contribute to the country's long-term prosperity. The objectives of the study is; to assess the existing literature on global women's empowerment; to identify the contribution of Sri Lankan women in-play in the country's economy; to highlight the need for women in economic, social, political, and environmental spheres for the country's sustainable development. The researcher used secondary sources and a qualitative approach to gather the necessary information for this purpose. The study's findings, based on the analysis of available data, reveal that women's contributions to various dimensions of sustainable development in the country are insufficiently recognized. Economic opportunities for women are limited, with men dominating positions of political power. Women's societal roles are marginalized, resulting in minimal contribution to national progress. Furthermore, women's rights are grossly violated, hindering their full participation in addressing the nation's issues. Additionally, women are disproportionately affected by environmental challenges, yet their involvement in environmental protection is often overlooked. The research concludes that sustainable development in Sri Lanka cannot be achieved by solely acknowledging men's participation in economic, social, political, and environmental spheres; it necessitates the empowerment of women and the attainment of gender equality. Given that women constitute 1000 females per 974 males in the Sri Lankan population, it is imperative to provide them with the necessary tools to engage in all development endeavors. Thus, this paper urges the Sri Lankan government to make a firm commitment to advancing women's rights and harnessing the nation's resources to achieve sustainable development. The study further highlights Sri Lankan women's contributions to entrepreneurial and economic development, underscoring the imperative of women's empowerment for sustainable growth in the nation.

Keywords: *Women empowerment, sustainable growth, gender equality, women's contributions*

Empowering Women for Sustainable Economic Growth in Sri Lanka: A Focus on Post-Pandemic Recovery Strategies

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial negative impact on Sri Lanka's economy, with women's employment suffering disproportionately. This study is intended to examine the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in the post-pandemic context of Sri Lanka and look at ways to enhance their economic empowerment. A qualitative research methodology was employed, and data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 women entrepreneurs, 5 policymakers, and 5 experts in the field. Thematic analysis was used to examine the full transcripts of the interview data. A popular technique for analyzing qualitative data is thematic analysis, which enables the discovery of emerging patterns, themes, and concepts. According to the study, women entrepreneurs struggle more than men to secure funding, market their products and services, and overcome legal and regulatory barriers. The post-pandemic environment, where many women entrepreneurs have reported noticing a decline in sales, only makes these challenges worse. The study suggests a comprehensive strategy that involves developing a welcoming policy environment, expanding access to financing and company development services, and improving women's abilities and understanding. In order to achieve Sri Lanka's sustained economic growth, the study underlines the importance of supporting women's entrepreneurship. The study makes the case that supporting female entrepreneurs can boost productivity, lead to the creation of jobs, and broaden the economy. Accordingly, women entrepreneurs have a big impact on Sri Lanka's economy, helping to develop it and generate jobs. The study makes recommendations for the creation of policies that support the economic emancipation of women and address the issues that women entrepreneurs encounter. This includes creating a supportive policy environment, increasing access to finance and business development services, and enhancing women's skills and knowledge. In light of the study's findings, Sri Lanka's post-pandemic recovery plans must give women's economic empowerment a top priority. Therefore, the study offers insightful information about the difficulties experienced by female entrepreneurs and offers doable recommendations for promoting their economic empowerment, which would ultimately support Sri Lanka's steady economic growth.

Keywords: *women entrepreneurs, economic empowerment, post-pandemic recovery, sustainable economic growth*

Impact of Women's Empowerment on the Sustainable Development of Household Economy of Fishing Community in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The establishment of a sustainable household economy as a means of putting an end to poverty is a major priority on both the global development agenda and the agendas of governments all over the world. However, household economic policies have predominantly targeted males, which has widened the gap between men and women in terms of productivity and income and increased gender inequality in household economic activities. This study seeks to identify the effects of women's empowerment on household economic development and to investigate the role empowered women play in reducing household poverty in Sri Lanka's fishery community. The data used in this study were collected from 15 villages along the coast of Sri Lanka's eastern area. A well-structured questionnaire was used to collect the data from a sample of 400 randomly selected women from these villages. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses developed in this research. The findings show that enhanced women's access to education and employment, resource ownership, and decision-making authority in family business operations have considerably improved the fishing community's household economy by raising household incomes and living standards. Similarly, violence against women in fishing communities, forcing women to work as housewives and preventing them from working, also significantly affects economic development by reducing the per capita income of fishing communities in the region. Therefore, this paper urges local governments to demonstrate a strong commitment to empowering women and maximizing their potential in the fishing community to achieve sustainable domestic economic development.

Keywords: *Women Empowerment, Household Economy, Sustainable Development*

Empowerment of Women through Promotion and Development of Rural Tourism: Special focus on Khultabad and Shulibhanjan

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Abstract

Khultabad and Sulibhanjan are part of the tourist heritage sites in the Aurangabad district. The town of Khuldabad is 24 km from Aurangabad city. It contains the shrines of the most famous saints of the Dakhan. It is known as the Valley of Saints, or the Abode of Eternity because, in the 14th century, several Sufi saints chose to reside here. The tomb of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and his trusted general Qamar-ud-din Khan, Asaf Jah I first Nizam of Hyderabad are in this town, and so is the tomb of Malik Ambar. There is also a famous Bhadra Maruti Temple, Sulibhanjan situated on the western side of Aurangabad, an ancient capital of Rahstrakata. It has a natural panoramic view. It is a famous pilgrim center and a yatra held on the Datta Jayanti day. Amidst all this tourism influx, women in this area have not benefitted much due to, cultural challenges, improper tourism policies, and initiatives to promote rural tourism. Though there are crafts, artifacts, handlooms, folk traditions, etc, they have not been empowered enough to improve their livelihoods. The paper looks at the best initiatives and practices that may be adopted from other areas and other countries to empower local people and in particular women economically.

Keywords: *women, economy, tourism*

Attainment of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in India: An insight analysis in the Context of SDGs

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Abstract

Women have been an integral part of India's culture and society since ancient times. However, the status of women in India has been a topic of debate and concern for many years. Despite the progress made in recent years, there are still many challenges that women in India face. The overall average score of Indian all states and Union Territories on gender equality was 36 out of 100. Some figures stood out in the raw data included in the report. One in every three women has faced spousal violence and only 898 girls are born against every 1,000 boys on average – the SDG sex ratio target for 2030 is 954. About 32 percent of India's workforce is female, earning 30 percent less than men on average. On sex ratio, it is prevailing that there is no raw data from 14 states and Union Territories. Only in Dadra and Nagar Haveli, the female wage rate is higher than that of males. In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the female wage rate is equal to males. Puducherry, Madhya Pradesh, and Bengal are among the disappointing performers. On domestic violence, Sikkim reported the lowest percentage (3.5). The highest percentage of spousal violence was reported in Manipur (54.7 percent). Considering these facts, this paper is an attempt at an insight analysis to reflect the extent of gender equality and empowerment of women in India in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords: *Gender equality, Empowerment, Sustainable Development, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs).*

Exploring the Factors Influencing Women's Empowerment through Wedding Tourism: A Case Study of Bentota, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Wedding tourism has emerged as a rapidly growing niche market globally, driven by couples seeking picturesque locations for their wedding ceremonies. Sri Lanka, renowned for its scenic beauty, cultural richness, and hospitable citizens, has become a popular wedding destination. This study focuses specifically on Bentota, Sri Lanka, aiming to investigate the elements that contribute to women's empowerment through wedding tourism. The primary objective is to shed light on the mechanisms by which wedding tourism can support women's empowerment, encompassing economic, social, and psychological dimensions. Employing a mixed-methods research approach, qualitative data were collected from women employed in the tourism industry in Bentota. Surveys were utilized to gather information on participants' socioeconomic status, employment conditions, income levels, and perceptions of empowerment. In-depth interviews were also conducted with key stakeholders, including wedding planners, hotel managers, and local residents, to gain deeper insights into the socio-cultural context and identify factors that either support or hinder women's emancipation through wedding tourism. The findings reveal the existence of various psychological, socio-cultural, and economic factors that empower women in the tourism sector. Furthermore, this study provides valuable insights for policymakers, industry professionals, and communities, enabling the development of strategies to enhance the positive impact on women's lives. Moreover, the research findings contribute to the sustainable and inclusive development of tourism in other locations.

Keywords: *women empowerment, wedding tourism, sustainable development, entrepreneurship*

Women employment via community-based tourism: A case study of Beeralu Craft Industry

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Abstract

Beeralu or lace making can be considered one of the important traditional craft industries of Sri Lanka's heritage and has a history of over 600 years. Beeralu craft which is a cottage industry, especially down south has received worldwide recognition and is one of the specialties many tourists earnestly look for. Locals and foreign tourists flock to these villages in large numbers to watch these housewives working on these intricate lace-making designs. The study was devised to identify key challenges and struggles to promote the Beeralu craft among tourists. The study found that there are three key issues faced by women working in the Beeralu industry towards tourism. This industry is vital for the tourism sector and the country, hence these issues should be successfully addressed to promote and protect the industry and suffering workers. Those identified key issues are; increasing women unemployment, lack of women labour participation in the tourism industry, and fading out the Beeralu industry from society. The study focused on the issue of the lack of participation of women in the Beeralu industry in tourism. Thus, the study found out "what are the barriers that women in the Beeralu industry face in the way of toward to the tourism industry". The methodology adopted to carry out this case study is given below. The village Magalla was selected due to its popularity in the Beeralu industry in Sri Lanka. The population was the women working in the Beeralu industry and who live in Magalla. The snowball sampling method was used due to the non-availability of a registered name list of employees. Data was collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis and descriptive analysis. The findings depict that most of the women working in the Beeralu industry are aged or middle-aged and above. The majority of them had been educated via female relatives. The identified few obstacles are; women in the tourism industry face a lack of knowledge, lack of market, social-cultural barriers, lack of support from the government, and structural barriers to the industry. The study recommends the followings; educating society, developing community-based tourism, creating new markets for Beeralu, and educating about Beeralu spinning. Hence the study concludes that promoting community-based tourism in the country is the best solution for this industry to protect, promote and address social issues.

Keywords: *Beeralu craft industry, community-based tourism, Women unemployment, Tourism*

Analysis on Factors Affecting Women Career Advancement in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

In Sri Lanka, there are adequate provisions in the constitution that guarantee fundamental rights to women on par with men. However, women face a variety of problems and difficulties. There are numerous factors that affect the persistence and advancement of women in academia in Sri Lanka. The objective of this study was to investigate the elements that influence the career advancement of women in higher education institutions in Sri Lanka. As a methodology within a dyadic framework, the current study used a qualitative research approach with a fully completed cross-sectional survey questionnaire. 100 females academic from three different educational institutions in Ampara district were added to the study. Key findings of the study are given below; accordingly, there are seven factors such as cultural, family, individual, organizational, geographical, economic, legal, and constitutional that have an impact on women's career advancement. This study urges that we promote women's access to positions of leadership. Through political decision-making and gradually increasing the proportion of women in leadership roles in order to capitalize on women's skills. To provide an opportunity for higher education institutions to recognize the contribution and crucial role of women, it is also advised that a time frame be set for improving the representation of women in leadership roles. The results of this study can help policymakers and women in career advancement and leadership by contextualizing how women professionals view their work identities and the significance they place on career development. The study makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the factors influencing the career progression of women academics by examining a number of social-psychological aspects of women's perceptions of their career success. Future research is advised to compare the professional advancement of men and women and broaden the study variables.

Keywords: *Women's Leadership, Women's Challenges, Women's Encouragement, Women's Career Advancement.*

An Analysis of Female Undergraduate's Perception towards Career Barriers and Women's Career Advancement in the Tourism Industry in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Women make up the majority of the global tourism workforce, according to the World Tourism Organization. Despite the fact that women make up a major percentage of the tourism business globally, women are significantly underrepresented in the Sri Lankan tourism sector. The previous studies revealed that a very low percentage of students entered the relevant job markets after graduation and there is a low retention rate of female graduates in the tourism industry. Therefore, this study examined the female undergraduate's perception of women's career barriers and career advancement in the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. The population of the study consists of all the female undergraduates in Sri Lanka, and data was collected from 252 female tourism and hospitality undergraduates through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive analysis. The study found that the female undergraduates believe that the recruitment policies, promotion policies, training, and career development policies are not fair to women in the tourism industry and society perceives women have lower competence than men. Therefore, women hold lower status than men and gender discrimination negatively affect women's careers. Furthermore, the female undergraduates agree that individual factors such as children and family issues affect their careers in the industry. Moreover, female undergraduates perceive they have fewer opportunities for career advancement in the tourism industry. It is suggested that tourism establishments introduce policies to lower the barriers to career advancement, which will motivate female undergraduates to choose a tourism career.

Keywords: *Career Barriers, Female Undergraduates, Women Career Advancement, Tourism Industry*

Challenges for Women in the Tourism Sector: A Case Study of Jaffna District

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Abstract

Tourism has a crucial role to play in achieving the objectives of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable development goals, in particular the commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), women participate in 60–70% of the workforce in the tourism sector internationally. However, in developing countries like Sri Lanka the Tourism sector has traditionally been male-dominated, which has resulted in several challenges for women working in the industry. In Jaffna district, after 2009 the tourism sector is growing in a steady phase yet currently, a very small number of women are working in the sector. This paper intends to explore the socioeconomic challenges of women's involvement in the Tourism sector in the Jaffna district, especially focusing on women working in Hotels and Restaurants. As a case study approach, data were collected in the Jaffna district through interviews with female workers, focus group discussions along with existing literature reviews. The findings reveal that women face a range of challenges such as gender-based discrimination, safety and security concerns, and cultural and societal norms, and the ultimate failure was a lack of work-life balance. These challenges are compounded by cultural norms and social expectations that limit women's participation in the workforce. The findings suggest that addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that involves government, private sector, and civil society actors. The study concludes by providing recommendations for promoting gender equality and empowerment of women in the tourism sector in Jaffna district.

Keywords: *Sustainable Development, Gender equality, Women empowerment, Tourism*



Innovative Women's Venture Creation and Intrapreneurship

Exploring Spiritual Tourism in Empowering Women in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Sri Lanka, known for its rich spiritual heritage and captivating landscapes, has witnessed the growth of spiritual tourism in recent years. Spiritual tourism involves travelers seeking transformative experiences, personal growth, and spiritual enlightenment through visits to sacred sites, participating in rituals, and engaging with spiritual leaders. While spiritual tourism has garnered attention for its impact on the economy and cultural preservation, its significance in empowering women remains an area that requires exploration. This article delves into the significance of spiritual tourism development on women's empowerment in Sri Lanka, shedding light on the opportunities and challenges faced by women in this sector. Spiritual tourism development presents numerous socio-economic opportunities for women in Sri Lanka. Women entrepreneurs have been actively involved in establishing guesthouses, offering spiritual healing and wellness services, and creating authentic cultural experiences for tourists. These endeavors provide women with avenues to generate income, improve their financial status, and achieve economic independence. Women can develop essential skills, expand their networks, and contribute to their family's and community's economic well-being by participating in tourism. Spiritual tourism can also lead to personal empowerment for women in Sri Lanka. Engaging with spiritual leaders, participating in meditation and mindfulness practices, and visiting sacred sites can offer women transformative experiences that promote personal growth, self-reflection, and self-discovery. These experiences can empower women by enhancing their confidence, resilience, and overall well-being. Women involved in spiritual tourism may also have the opportunity to assume leadership roles, challenging traditional gender norms and inspiring others within their communities. While spiritual tourism development presents significant opportunities for women's empowerment, addressing the challenges that women may encounter is crucial. Gender-based discrimination, limited access to resources and decision-making processes, and societal expectations can hinder the full realization of women's empowerment in this sector. To overcome these challenges, stakeholders, including policymakers, tourism organizations, and women's advocacy groups, should collaborate to create inclusive policies, provide training and

capacity-building programs, and promote gender equality in the spiritual tourism industry. The significance of spiritual tourism development on women's empowerment in Sri Lanka is a compelling area of study. By recognizing the socio-economic, cultural, and personal dimensions of women's empowerment in this context, we can harness the potential of spiritual tourism to create positive change. It is essential for stakeholders to work together to address the challenges faced by women, create opportunities for their advancement, and ensure that the benefits of spiritual tourism are shared equitably. Through such collaborative efforts, Sri Lanka can pave the way for women's empowerment and inclusive growth in the realm of spiritual tourism.

Keywords: *Spiritual Tourism, Women Empowerment, Inquilines, Sustainable Tourism*

Empowering Women in Sri Lanka's Wellness Tourism

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Abstract

This abstract presents the research findings of a collaborative study on wellness tourism in Sri Lanka, focusing on empowering women in the industry and addressing their unique needs. The study comprises multiple research projects, each contributing to the overarching goal of enhancing wellness tourism in Sri Lanka. Mainly projects were focused to explore and identify the potential of wellness tourism in Sri Lanka, emphasizing the importance of empowering women in management roles and avoiding the risks associated with misinterpreting terminology in this sector. Basically attentive efforts taken to examine tourism travel trends and provides strategies to stakeholders, emphasizing the significance of women in management positions and fostering a respectful and culturally sensitive environment and capture guest expectations and potentials for the growth of wellness tourism in the country, a perceptual analysis of Ayurvedic practitioners to standardize wellness centers and improve the quality of the wellness industry in Sri Lanka, analyzes factors influencing the visit intentions of international tourists in wellness tourism, enabling targeted marketing and positioning of spa wellness services and facilities including two national and international niche markets on promoting wellness tourism in the North Central Province of Sri Lanka, emphasizing the importance of sufficient wellness events and their connection with other tourism activities and the challenges and opportunities for wellness tourism in the Japanese market, aiming to promote this niche market through qualitative methods. All these collaborative research projects contribute to wellness tourism by addressing women's empowerment, enhancing standards and practices, identifying prospects and challenges, and exploring niche markets. The findings provide recommendations to stakeholders in the Sri Lankan tourism industry to create an inclusive and empowering environment for women, capitalize on market opportunities, and enhance the overall wellness tourism experience in Sri Lanka. In conclusion, this collaborative study revealed the potential of wellness tourism in Sri Lanka and provides strategies to empower women, improve industry standards, and maximize the benefits of this growing sector. The research highlights the importance of women's participation and the need to cater to their specific needs to create a thriving and culturally sensitive wellness tourism industry in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Wellness Tourism, Sri Lanka, Women Empowerment, Strategies*

Sustainable Wellness Tourism-Based Cosmetology for Women

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Abstract

The number of nations marketing wellness tourism has increased from 65 in 2013 to more than 100 in 2018. In Sri Lanka, 74% of tourists from Western Europe have visited for health purposes, with Germany being the highest proportion. In 2020, 1,839 tourists visited for Health/Ayurvedic purposes out of 2,566 Western Europeans. (Authority, 2020). Malwathu Oya is where the first Sri Lankan immigrants built their colonies in the Anuradhapura period. This might be the best place they could find, where they could fulfill every necessity including natural medicinal sources. The research area is based on four Divisional Secretariat (1) Madawachchiya (2) Nuwaragam Palatha Central (3) Madhu (4) Maha Vilachchiya. This research is to promote ayurvedic cosmetology for women and to identify the potential to develop products or services for Sustainable Wellness Tourism while empowering women's participation around Malwathu Oya. The methodology of the study is based on primary and secondary data in four main slots related to four divisional secretariat areas. The data analysis is based on qualitative analysis which reveals the potential to engage with wellness tourism-based cosmetology practices. Short Term Benefits-Booklet and E-book publishing based on Sustainable Wellness Tourism. A tour itinerary for the target market in Sustainable Wellness Tourism and the itinerary includes knowledge-enhancing programs. Feasibility Study on Social, Economic and Natural Environment. A complimentary session will be provided on cosmetology. Long Term Benefits-Proposal for the establishment of the Center for Sustainable Wellness Tourism Cosmetology and earning foreign currency through the center. Physical, Mental, and Spiritual aspect development of the wellness travelers Community-based tourism development. SME Sector development and Job opportunities for Ayurvedic and Tourism sector. Destination-oriented authentic experience for Tourists on Sustainable Wellness Tourism and Cosmetology. Paid 2–3-day certificate courses, Workshops for travelers with an awareness program will be conducted to earn foreign exchanges.

Keywords: *Wellness Tourism, Cosmetology, Women, Malwathu Oya*

Cultural Shows as a Tool to Promote Tourism in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The project of developing cultural shows to promote Sri Lankan tourism is an attractive attempt that aims to showcase the rich cultural heritage of the country while attracting both local and international tourists. By presenting traditional dancing, drumming and singing, this project offers a unique and immersive experience for the visitors, allowing them to explore the vibrant Sri Lankan culture. Project's mission is the preservation and promotion of Sri Lankan cultural traditions. Firstly, it aims to celebrate and preserve Sri Lanka's diverse cultural traditions ensuring they sustain for the next generations. Secondly, it seeks to attract domestic and international tourists by offering them an authentic and attractive cultural experience that goes beyond the pristine beaches and lush landscapes. The methodology of the project includes several key elements to ensure its successful execution. Firstly, the artistic program development involves extensive research on Sri Lankan traditional performing arts to create an enchanting and culturally significant lineup of dance, drumming, and singing performances. Artist selection and training play a crucial role in the project. The collaboration with the Maagha dance company which is owned by me and the students at the University of Visual and Performing Arts provides access to a group of talented artists. They are well-trained, ensuring the highest level of artistic excellence. Promotion and marketing play a vital role in attracting audiences. Using various channels such as social media, traditional media, websites and collaboration with various tourism organizations will access to reach both local and international tourists. Ticketing and Sales management ensure the smooth flow of the event. The project implements both online and offline ticketing systems to facilitate easy access for attendees. The assumed cultural show performances are given below:

1. Aashirwadha kavi, traditional dance duet.
2. Traditional bera fusion.
3. Folk dance including goyam, kulu, pathuru and raban
4. Ana bera, Nonchi kolama and salu paliya
5. Gajaga and mayura dance fusion.
6. Gini sisila, pandham paliya and thelme dance.

This project attracts both local and international tourists who seek immersive cultural experiences. The show will become a unique selling point, distinguishing Sri Lanka from other destinations and enticing visitors to explore its rich heritage. Nevertheless, the project stimulates economic growth by generating revenue and employment opportunities for youth and women. In conclusion, the cultural show project holds immense promise for promoting Sri Lankan tourism. Through authentic and captivating performances, it celebrates the nation's rich cultural heritage. With collaborations, meticulous planning, and the support of esteemed organizations, the project can attract tourists, stimulate economic growth, preserve traditions and showcase the beauty of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Cultural Tourism, Women Empowerment*

Opportunities and Potential of Women in Silver Tourism

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Abstract

Silver Economy is an aging-related business and service provision opportunities after the grey hair of senior people named by the European Union which will affect the world economy in the next era. With this phenomenon, European Union considered a new trend, and the demand of senior citizens connected with a willingness to travel emerged with a new segment known as Silver Tourism. This new niche market segment creates many opportunities for Women in rural communities of Sri Lanka. With the increasing number of silver tourists, this project is proposed to build a holiday home with a blend of Sri Lankan traditions, architecture, luxury, and activities suitable for senior tourists because there are only very limited hotels that are targeted and specially constructed to assist senior tourists. The project will be implemented at Walawwa named “ Nisala Walawwa” located at Rabukkana, is a boutique hotel concept to attract foreign tourists which is one of the key architectural concepts in Sri Lanka during the old days. Walawwa is a house that was able to afford only by rich people and brings elegance and luxury blends with Sri Lankan traditions to provide a unique experience to the clients. Through this project, most of the working staff are expected to be recruited from the local areas and bring out the luxury with elegance touch with the historical Sri Lankan traditions mainly involving women-based activities and food concepts which will be suitable for the silver tourists to address their Physical, Mental and Spiritual wellness.

Keywords: *Silver tourism, Walawwa, Sri Lankan traditions, women in tourism*



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