

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM: CASE OF THE BEERALU INDUSTRY

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Abstract

By promoting women which is working in the Beeralu industry towards tourism industry, can successfully address three main problems that country is suffering. Those are, increasing women unemployment, lack of women labour participation in the tourism industry and fading out the Beeralu industry from the society. But the author has identified a lack of participation of women in the Beeralu industry in tourism. Thus, the author needed to find out “what are the barriers that women in the Beeralu industry face in the way of toward to the tourism industry”. To do that, the author selected to Magalla village that most famous for the Beeralu industry in Sri Lanka. The population was the all the women in Beeralu industry who live in Magalla. Primary data analysis was done from fifteen respondents using snowball sampling method under purposive sampling method. In the way of collecting data author used semi structured in-depth interviews. The data collected in this way was analyzed by the thematic analysis and descriptive analysis. After that, based on the analyzed data author have identified most of the women that be in the Beeralu industry is age in middle-aged and above and majority of them had been educated it via female relatives. Furthermore, author have been identified few obstacles that women in the tourism industry face namely, Lack of knowledge, Lack of market, Social-cultural Barriers, Lack of support of government, Structural barriers of the industry. Moreover, author have been introduced some recommendations such as educating society, develop community-based tourism, create new markets for Beeralu and educate about Beeralu Spinning. Finally, author have been concluded promoting community-based tourism in the country is the best solution for the each and every social problem that author is focus in this research paper.

Key Words: Beeralu industry, Community-based tourism, Women unemployment

1.0 Introduction

In terms of percentage, female unemployment in Sri Lanka is 6.5%. Women, who make up the majority of the country's population, endure unemployment, which is one of the country's primary concerns. This is primarily due to the societal occupational structural change. Women who were restricted to the house and completing their tasks were used to self-employment as a means of earning additional revenue in the prior subsistence economic pattern. The Beeralu industry, rope twisting, palm mat weaving, pottery industry, and so forth all played important

roles. However, when the country's occupational structure changed progressively as a result of industrialization, these self-employment strategies faded. As a result, female unemployment has increased. Simultaneously, the aforementioned industries, which were self-employed, increasingly exited society.

It is quite difficult to get women to work in Sri Lanka due to cultural and societal norms. As a result, effective ways to minimize female unemployment cannot be found in Sri Lanka. As a result, there is a tremendous need for a program that does not disrupt social norms in order to reduce women's unemployment. Looking at the situation in this manner, the author realized that the tourism sector is a very successful strategy.

Tourism is a major source of foreign income in Sri Lanka. In the current situation that Sri Lanka is facing, the majority of citizens see tourism as a wonderful healer. Sri Lanka has a diverse culture and society. Thus, Sri Lanka is well-known among foreign tourists for its culture. Every year, a large number of people visit the island to experience its culture and civilization.

As a result, the author discovered that by guiding this woman to the tourism industry, which assesses socio-cultural value, female unemployment would be minimized. However, the main issue here is that women have relatively little representation in the tourism industry. Various research studies demonstrate that there are numerous explanations for this, all of which are founded in social culture (S. Silva, K. Mendis-2017). According to the sources, there are issues with guiding women directly to the tourism industry. However, as the author discovered, guiding women indirectly towards the tourism industry might have very positive outcomes. As an indirect tactic, it is conceivable to direct Sri Lanka's ancient female dominated sectors towards the tourism industry. It is possible to apply it using concepts such as community-based tourism, cultural tourism, and so on. Through these concepts, tourism demand in the country related to social activities and culture is established, therefore there is the possibility of developing many new sources of income with little effort. As a result, successful solutions will develop for all three major social problems listed by the author above, namely female unemployment, a decline in female engagement in the tourism industry, and the preservation of Sri Lanka's historic industries. In this study, the author examines the Beeralu industry in Sri Lanka as a case study because of its strong female engagement and overseas demand.

Beeralu is a traditional industry that has long been a part of the culture. When investigating the beginnings of the Beeralu industry in the country, it goes back to the ancient age to the country's cotton yarn manufacture. (D. W. Kinkini Hemachandra – 2015). Although it is a legacy of Portuguese and Dutch colonization, it is now part of our culture and has a history dating back over 600 years. Beeralu craft, which is a cottage business in the south, has achieved worldwide reputation and is one of the specialties that many tourists seek for. Locals and foreign tourists alike go to these villages to witness these housewives work on these elaborate lace-making creations. Moreover, being a female dominant industry, it can contribute to reduce women unemployment in the country. Unfortunately, it is now on the danger of being forgotten due to lack of proper management by the authorized bodies.

Finally, the author discovered that there is a significant demand for Beeralu products in the tourism industry, but women have a low proclivity to work in the tourism industry. Thus, the

author's primary objective is to "Examine the barriers for women working in the Beeralu industry to move towards to the tourism industry". In additions, author focuses on the nature of the women in the Beeralu industry. Finally, author have given some recommendations as solutions to the problems.

2.0 Methodology

Since no research have been conducted about the relevant topic in the Sri Lanka, the author decided to collect primary data to do this research. Due to time constraints and travel limitations in the country the author decided to collect the data using online methods. The methodology of the study contains two main steps.

2.1. Population and sample

Author have selected the village Magalla that are located in southern coastal area as the area of the study. According to the literatures southern coastal area is famous for Beeralu industry. Mainly it has spread out in Matara, Weligama, Dikwella, Mirissa, Magalla. However, author have selected the village Magalla as the area of the study. According to the previous literatures village Magalla have been famous for the Beeralu industry from the Dutch era and they have closely related and have been traded with the peoples of Magalla that produce Beeralu lace. Thus, the population of the study is all the women that are working in Beeralu industry in Magalla. This population is somewhat unclear because we can't clearly identify all the women that have been in the industry. Hence, fifteen snowball sampling method have been implemented to collect data. By using snowball sampling method fifteen (15) women that are being in the industry have been used to collect the data.

2.2. Data collecting and analysis.

The author has decided to analyze this case study in depth. To do that in-depth interview method have been implemented to collect the data. All the interviews have been conducted via mobile phone. Author designed few questions before interview women. The designed questionnaire includes two main parts. In part one (01) author focuses on the demographic data and the part two (02) focuses on the objective one. Furthermore, both open-ended and close-ended questions have included to the questionnaire. All the in-depth interviews have been done in Sinhala due to lack of English knowledge of the women in the industry. The collected data in Sinhala have been converted to the English and used them to analysis. All the Collected qualitative data have been analyzed using thematic analysis by the author and collected quantitative data have analyzed using descriptive analysis via excel.

The aim of the study was to respect the rights and confidentiality of the participants, and informed consent was obtained. Avoid using the real names of the respondents in our research materials, including the final report, presentations, or any published work. Instead, assign codes or pseudonyms to each participant to maintain their anonymity.

2.3. Research Limitations

We adopted a methodology that primarily used in-depth interviews to explore the complex dynamics of women's employment in the brewing industry within the framework of community-based tourism. However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations associated with our methodology that may affect the reliability and scope of our findings.

In-depth interviews over the phone:

A significant limitation applies to the method of conducting in-depth interviews, mainly over the telephone. This approach, chosen for its practicality, introduces certain constraints. The lack of face-to-face interaction affected the depth of responses and nuanced understanding of participants' experiences. By transparently addressing these limitations, the researcher worked to increase the credibility of our study and provide a basis for refining methodological approaches in future research efforts in the field of community-based tourism and women's employment in the brewing industry.

3. Literature review

Community-based tourism (CBT) has garnered substantial interest as a strategy for empowering nearby communities—women in particular—by creating job opportunities and promoting sustainable development. With an emphasis on the special case study of the Beeralu sector, this review of the literature attempts to investigate the body of research on the opportunities and obstacles for women's employment in the context of community-based tourism.

Known for its elaborate lace-making customs, the Beeralu sector offers a distinctive case study in the larger framework of community-based tourism. Understanding the unique possibilities and problems faced by women working in this field has received little scholarly attention, which makes this research especially important.

3.1 Community-Based Tourism and Women's Empowerment:

Several academics have emphasized how community-based tourism can provide women with a platform for socio-cultural involvement and economic participation, hence empowering them (Scheyvens, 2002; Gurung, 2010). Women's participation in tourism has been associated with improved community development and cultural heritage protection.

3.2 Challenges Faced by Women in Community-Based Tourism:

While there are potential benefits to community-based tourism, numerous studies highlight the difficulties experienced by women who participate in such projects. Common obstacles that may prevent women from actively participating in society include inadequate access to education and training, mobility restrictions, and traditional gender roles (Pattullo, 1996; Jamal & Stronza, 2009).

3.3 Gender Perspectives in Tourism:

Researchers like Enloe (1990) and Chant (1991) stress the significance of incorporating gendered viewpoints in their studies on tourism. It is essential to comprehend the complex ways

that gender dynamics influence women's participation in community-based tourism in order to create treatments and policies that work.

Strategies for Overcoming Barriers; A number of research offer methods for overcoming the obstacles that women encounter in community-based tourism. These include of activities that question established gender norms, gender-sensitive policies, and focused skill development programs (Dredge & Jenkins, 2003; Rogerson, 2004).

This analysis of the literature offers a basis for comprehending the dynamics of women's employment in community-based tourism, with a particular emphasis on the Beeralu sector. It emphasizes the need for more research to fully understand the special opportunities and constraints faced by women practicing this traditional skill within the larger context of community-based tourism by combining the body of existing knowledge. The knowledge gathered from this research will be useful in creating tactics that support women's empowerment and environmentally friendly, locally sourced tourism.

4. Findings and discussion

As the author have mentioned in above author have collected the data from 15 women that be in the Beeralu industry. From the fifteen (15) responsible responds author focused on the age of the respondents. Age is one of the main components that we can use to understand the nature of the women. It could be notice that six (6) number of women are in ages between fifty (50) to sixty (60). The percentage is 40% from the total percentage. Minimum number of women record from the thirty (30) to forty (40). The amount is one (01) woman and it's 6.6% from the total population. Moreover, there were no women over seventy (70) years or below thirty (30) ages. The results have been depicted in chart 01.

And after, the author focused on the years of working in the industry. Majority of respondents had been working in the industry between thirty-six to forty years (36-40). There were five (5) women and it was thirty-three-point three percent (33.3%) from the total population. According to the data that have depicted in chart 2, majority of the respondents have been in working in the industry from minimum twenty-one (21) years and above. It means that majority of the women have been working before about the beginning of the twenty first (21) century.

According to the collected data author can be concluded almost every women are in middle age and above. And also, majority of women have been educated about the Beeralu from their female relatives due to the female dominant industry.

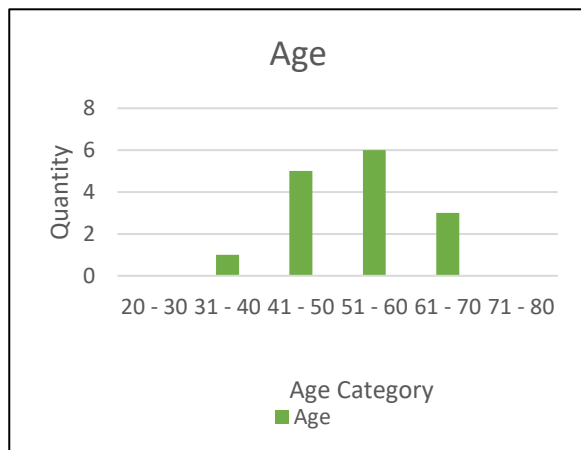


Chart 01. Ages of the women in Beeralu Industry

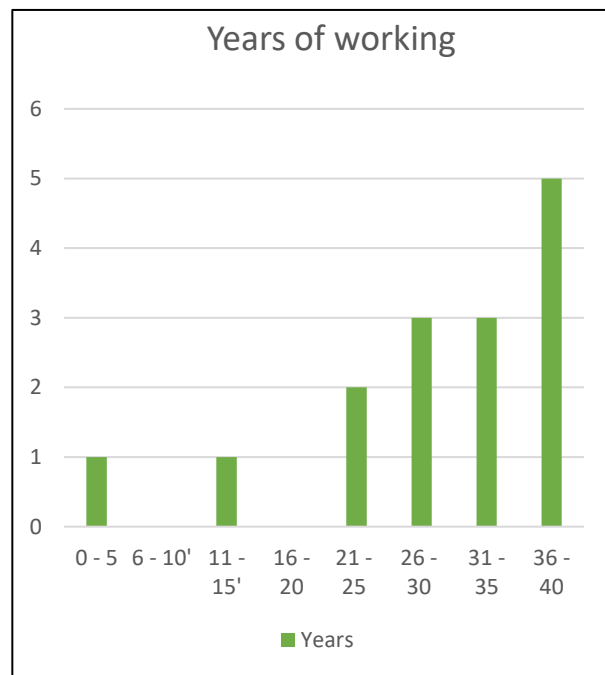


Chart 02: Age of the women in Beeralu industry

Way of education	Amount
From households and relatives	8
From school	5
Other	2

Table 01: Way of education of Beeralu spinning

Moreover, the author focused on the ways of educating about the spinning of the Beeralu. According to the table 01. Majority of women had educated from their home. There were eight (8) respondents as a percentage of fifty-three-point three percent (53.3%) from the total sample. And five (5) women as a percentage of thirty-three-point three percent (33.3%) had educated from their school. And also, two women as a percentage of thirteen three-point three percent (13.3%) had educated from other sources such as educational institutions and government agencies such as National Craft council. As the author have mentioned above the Beeralu industry is female dominant and have been passing mother to his daughter. Thus, majority of women have educated about the spinning from their households and their relatives. And also, as per mentioned by Mrs M. B. Priyani¹ the craft educating had been as a school subject the

¹ Mrs M. B. Priyani is the owner of the Thilini lase enterprises which is famous for Beeralu lase production.

eighties (80) and nineties (90) decades. Thus, the considerable number of women had been educating from the school with that.

Furthermore, when it's come to the tourism and women in the Beeralu industry the author thought to find out the nature of the connection of the women in the Beeralu industry. As the results of the findings, everyone as well as hundred percent (100%) in the sample had good knowledge about the demand of the Beeralu production among tourists. In addition, author focused on the relationship of the women with tourists. In that case majority of respondent as an amount of eleven (11) women which represent seventy-three-point three percent (73.3%) have not been closing with tourists. But, four (4) women which represent twenty-six-point six percent (26.6%). Thereby author can be assuming that majority of women in the Beeralu

industry may not be with tourism directly. These four women were asked about the purpose of relationship with tourists. Every woman which represents above four (4) have been connecting with tourists for business purposes only such as selling their products beside three (3) women out of four (4) meet tourists once a month and only one (1) woman from out of four (4) meet tourists once a year.

Author used thematic analysis to analyze qualitative data. Based on collected data author built few themes under each objective.

Table 02. Theme summary

Objective	Themes
01. Examine the barriers of women working in the Beeralu industry to move forward to the tourism industry.	I. Lack of knowledge II. Lack of market III. Social-cultural Barriers IV. Lack of support of government V. Structural barriers of the industry

The knowledge possessed by the society about a certain industry is helpful for the continued existence of that industry in the society. This is also common for the Beeralu industry. At present, the lack of a community of knowledge related to the Beeralu industry, and a lack of continuous programs for its formal study, have hindered the flow of knowledge about the Beeralu industry from generation to generation. For that reason, there is a lack of knowledge in the society related to producing products with quality enough to move towards the tourism industry. This lack of knowledge keeps women in the Beeralu industry out of the tourism industry. According to the female respondents, most of them had acquired knowledge about this industry from their housemates and female relatives. But at present there is a shortage of such knowledgeable women in the society. Also, another group had gained knowledge about this industry through school education in the 70s and 80s. It is a pity that those subject series are left out of school education.

“Now there are very few women who know how to weave Beeralu. You can count the people with your fingers. This is an industry passed down from generation to generation. Many of those generations have been destroyed now.”

-Anonymous respondent-

“We learned this from school. Schools used to teach these as subjects. Now there is a big lack of teachers in such schools.”

-Anonymous respondent-

Moreover, overcoming language barriers is very important to establish a presence in the tourism industry. According to the studies done by the author, it was found that the existing language knowledge of the women engaged in Beeralu industry is low. Apart from the four women who work closely with the tourists mentioned above, other women did not have the ability to handle the international language. This is one of the strongest barriers for women in the Beeralu industry to move towards the tourism industry.

Lack of proper marketing in the tourism industry was also identified as a major problem for women in Beeralu industry. In the face of the above-mentioned obstacles, women who are unable to reach their products to tourists have their sources of income blocked and at the same time, the strongest reason for them to be discouraged is the lack of proper marketing. One group of people is waiting to take advantage of the absence of these markets. That is, intermediaries. These middlemen take the Beeralu products from women to tourists and thereby earn additional profits. Due to the activities of middlemen many women do not get proper benefits and for that reason many women leave this industry. Here I would like to bring a personal experience of the author. One day on a bus in an urban area of Colombo, I met a father selling Beeralu renda woven by his daughter. Due to the lack of proper marketing, he boarded the buses and sold these products at very low prices. Such a fate has befallen the producers due to the lack of a proper market. Further, according to the gross income expenditure analysis done by the author, it was found that a yard of Beeralu renda is bought from women produced by the middlemen for Rs. 300, it is sold to local people for Rs. 450 and to foreigners for Rs. 1000. There they get huge profits from the tourism industry. But those benefits are not available to the women who produce them. Due to this reason many women leave the industry as women do not get proper income in Beeralu industry. Also, at present, the youth community is also leaving the industry very rapidly due to this reason. It will cause demise of Beeralu industry in future.

“At present, young people are not coming to do this industry and the reason for this is that they do not get proper income from it.”

-Anonymous Respondent-

Further, the author identified these socio-cultural barriers as a barrier for women in the Beeralu industry to move towards the tourism industry. According to the research papers studied by the author, socio-cultural barriers have been identified as the main reason for the decrease in female participation in the tourism industry (S. Silva, K. Mendis-2017). These barriers have also affected women in the Beeralu industry. Misconceptions about the tourism industry and lack of experience have been the main reasons why many of these women are reluctant to move towards the tourism industry.

According to Keynesian economics, government intervention is essential for the proper functioning of economic activities. There, the government should provide subsidies, carry out government expenditure, spread innovation, guide the way, provide education, etc. These activities are a reason to encourage manufacturers. According to the respondent women, there is a strong lack of programs implemented by the government to move this industry towards the tourism industry. This fact keeps the women employed in the Beeralu industry out of the tourism industry. For example, the owner of Thilini Lace Enterprises, a prominent name in this industry, made a statement to the author. According to her, at present Beeralu imports the yarn used as raw materials in the industry from India. During the Covid-19 crisis, import restrictions also hampered yarn imports. It strongly affected Beeralu products. She says that it was a moment when the government's intervention was essential, but the government's intervention there was little. It seems that the government's lack of intervention is the strongest obstacle.

Beeralu industry is a manual industry. Spending a lot of time to complete one product is one of the main structural barriers in this industry. According to the respondent women, it takes approximately one day to drill one meter of Beeralu Renda. But the income of one renda woven is about 300 rupees. According to that, the daily gross income of women working in this industry is around 300 rupees per day. This is a major reason for women's discouragement as this is not enough money to even make a living in Sri Lanka for one day. Due to this fact and the fact that they do not have a proper market in the tourism industry, they leave this industry. Nowadays, as a solution to this, manufacturers are accustomed to using Beeralu weaving machinery. But it has been the strongest hindrance to move the Beeralu industry towards the tourism industry.

5. Recommendations

Educating society

Most of the things that today's society understands as the tourism industry are of a somewhat negative nature. Also, they only see the tourism industry as the tourist hotel industry. However, they do not have a proper understanding of the high demand for handicrafts in Sri Lanka in the tourism industry. This lack of knowledge is in the nature of the socio-cultural barriers mentioned above in the movement of women working in Beeralu industry towards the tourism industry. The mass media and social media of the country can be successfully used to eliminate this. The above problems can be successfully solved by making documentaries about the existing tourism demand for Beeralu products, conducting interviews to share the experiences

of women selling Beeralu products in the tourism industry, writing social media articles, and arguing in the misconceptions about the tourism industry in the society.

Develop community-based tourism

Sri Lanka is a country where community-based tourism can be implemented very successfully. By using the existing socio-cultural values of Sri Lanka, maintaining its authenticity, and placing them among the tourists, high benefits can be achieved. Beeralu industry is also very important in community-based tourism. In addition to Beeralu products, it seems that there is a high demand among tourists for the produced procedure. Respondent women say that during the peak season, tourists come to their homes with tourist guides and study Beeralu weaving with great interest. After that they will be given money without buying Beeralu Renda. Accordingly, by formally developing community-based tourism through the intervention of the government, many of the main problems identified by the author in this research, such as the reduction of women's participation in the tourism industry, and the withdrawal of the Beeralu industry from the tourism industry, will have very successful solutions. Also, nowadays many manufacturers are using machines to weave Beeralu yarn for their convenience. It has been one of the strongest reasons to undermine the authenticity of Beeralu industry. It can also be successfully covered by the development of community-based tourism. Because in community-based tourism, tourist demand is mainly directed to Beeralu weaving and not to products.

Create new markets for Beeralu

According to the author's findings, one of the main obstacles was the lack of a market. In order to build a proper market, the intervention of the government is essential. These markets should be created in places where tourists hang out the most. Also, the barriers to access of Beeralu produced women to the markets created should also be minimal. Although there are a few such markets operating today, there are many barriers for these women to reach them. The construction of such barrier-free markets through government intervention can provide successful solutions to many of these problems.

Educate Beeralu spinning

Looking further, the lack of knowledge about Beeralu weaving is also a major problem. In order to solve this problem, a formal education pattern should be implemented, for that, once again a curriculum of Beeralu and related handicrafts can be brought to school education, and formal educational institutions can be created. Thus, school children will have knowledge about it from a young age and thus the increase in the attraction of the Beeralu industry and the increase in the knowledge in the society about those methods will lead to the dependence of this Beeralu industry in the society. At the same time, by implementing the above matters, women in the Beeralu industry can be successfully directed towards the tourism industry.

6. Conclusion

As per the findings, it is concluded that majority of women that are being in the Beeralu industry is in middle aged and above. And there is a clear gap with women in the Beeralu industry and the tourists. Furthermore, author could find some barriers that have been occurred on the

women in Beeralu industry to prevent go towards to the tourism industry. Those were, Lack of knowledge, Lack of market, Social-cultural Barriers, Lack of support of government and Structural barriers of the industry. To solve these barriers author have recommended educating society, Development community-based tourism, Create new markets, educating about Beeralu sobbing. According to the findings author can be concluded the concept of Community-based tourism is the best answer of all of these problems. By proper management and promoting community-based tourism in the rural areas of the country, many more industries like Beeralu industry will be protected and will be share the national income of tourism among the people of rural areas.

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