

CHALLENGES OF WOMEN IN TOURISM CAREERS

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Abstract

Women's employment in 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 suggest career development approaches to empower women in the industry. There are three specific objectives of the study as, to define the areas of women's enrolment in the tourism industry, to identify the challenges facing by the women who engaged in tourism industry and to suggest a sustainable approach for career development of women in the tourism industry. A mixed method was utilized to gather data and they were quantitatively analyzed using SPSS software. Women entrepreneurship development, tourism education, community acceptance of tourism and women's leadership in tourism identified as key facets to face the most challenges of women in tourism. Further, social barriers, organizational barriers and individual barriers were identified in the study. Approaches for mitigation of challenges and develop an attractive employment environment for women in the tourism industry in Sri Lanka were proposed. The best practices of women in tourism employments were defined comparatively in the recommendations.

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

1.0 Introduction

Improvements in women education and increasing number of women in workforce result in high economic contribution of women in the world. Quality education and opportunities given for women in education and numerous other sectors supports women empowerment and active contribution in economy (Raihan et al., 2022). Tourism industry as an attractive industry which contributes to the global economy with 7.6% of global GDP has exhibited an important role in the global economy (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022). There are many positive economic contributions of tourism industry such as income, balance of payment, investments, employment and many more (UNWTO, 2020). Employment as a

benefit contributes with 289 million jobs worldwide in 2021. Tourism industry accounted for 10% employment in the globe. According to the UN Global Report on Women in Tourism; it is recorded that 54% of tourism workforce in globe is women where it is 39% in broader economy. Women contribution in tourism workforce in Asia and Pacific Region is recorded as 52% of tourism workforce. Many studies related to women employment in tourism industry imply that there is a gap in associated benefited provided for women compared to the opposite gender in tourism industry. It is records even the wages obtained by women employees are 14.7% lesser than the wages of men. This discrimination results job dissatisfaction, demotivation and career instability among the women who engaged in tourism industry. This study focused on defining the challenges face by women in tourism careers in Sri Lanka. The results of the research produce approaches to empower women in tourism industry and their career development. The specific objectives of the study cover areas of women employment in tourism, challenges face by the women in tourism industry and sustainable approaches for the career development of women. The study is significant in empowering Sri Lankan women by encouraging women to enter and retain in tourism industry through career development pathways that have ability to ensure bright future for all women in tourism industry of Sri Lanka.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Tourism in Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan has been opened for tourism since 1960ies and as an island with rich diversity in culture and nature it has been a popular destination for tourists who visit South Asia. Sri Lanka tourism has been going through lot of ups and down in past years. The highest number of tourist arrivals in past five years recorded in 2018, stating 2,333,796 of arrivals. The Ester Attack and Covid 19 pandemic hits the tourism industry of Sri Lanka in a way which the industry still struggle in attracting tourists. The highest number of tourist arrival after the pandemic is 719,978 which records in year 2022 (SLTDA, 2023a). Currently, the Sri Lankan tourism industry been promoted under the tagline of “So Sri Lanka”. The current tourist arrivals of Sri Lanka record 335,679 as of March 2023 (SLTDA, 2023b). Russia, India and Germany leads as the main tourist generators of Sri Lanka in the first quarter of the year.

2.2 Sri Lankan Tourism Contribution in Women Employment

The Strategic Plan of Sri Lanka Tourism 2022-2025 identified lack of women participation in tourism industry as a gap in creating equal opportunities in tourism. Action areas to increase the women participation in tourism was listed under Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (SLITHM). SLITHM has been assigned to conduct awareness sessions for school children including gender lens to the sessions. Actions falling under this strategy are, promote women based tourism SMEs in order to develop women entrepreneurship, promote women participation in industry through facilitating awareness for partnerships, increase the intake of SLITHM with 30% of female trainees by 2025 as the strategic objective (SLTDA, 2022b). According to the statistical data regarding Sri Lankan tourism industry; it is stated that 171,764 of direct employment and 347,751 number of indirect employment were the tourism contribution in employment in year 2020. 81% of the tourism employment recorded

in Hotel and Restaurant sector (SLTDA, 2022a). Since there are no statistical records regarding the proportion of women employment in Sri Lankan tourism industry, the statistical gap will be considered in the questionnaire survey.

2.3 Areas of Women Involvement in Tourism

Women employment is displayed in tourism in the areas of hotels, restaurants, transport, event planning, tourism supporting services such as information centers, heritage management (Kladeen, 2020). Further, women work in numerous positions in leading levels where women involved in 47% of management level. Even though, there are on 12% of women in corporate level positions. 5% covered by the top management jobs and less than 1% in the highest positions in corporate level. It is recognized that women represents 4% of top wage earners (Türkcan, 2022). In USA study it is recorded that only 9% women reach executive level positions where there are 25% of men reach executive levels. In Europe, women represent 30% of management, yet less than 5% reach the senior management level roles (Raihan et al., 2022). When it comes to the leadership in contemporary tourism industry, leaders are concentrated in employee development, decentralized power distribution in decision making, problem solving. The intellectual stimulation and change management are given priority. Mostly the leaders in modern leadership positions are considering autocratic and transactional leadership style. Women are generally display transformational leadership style in their roles. This supports organizations in focusing on assignments and attempts the needs of the subordinates (Trisanti et al., 2022). Even though there is women predominance in tourism industry is displayed, there is an underrepresentation of them in management levels. Even after some of them successful in reaching the management level, there is a high pressure on women (Raihan et al., 2022). The following section will describe the challenges face by women in tourism employment.

2.4 Challenges of Women in Tourism

There are many tourism related literature found in the area of challenges in women employment in tourism. According to Yasin E.et.al. (2019) there are three categories of challenges face by women in tourism industry. Those are namely; job challenges, social challenges and administrative challenges. The study describes the women who work in star hotels in Cairo. Accordingly, the women faces challenges related to their job performance and also challenges by the society also displays the most significant negative impact on career advancement of women in tourism. Liu T. et. Al (2019) uncovers challenges of women career advancement in tourism industry. Career expectations, work family balance identifies as the independent variables where the organizational commitment displays mediate influence on career advancement of women. Yun W.K. (2011) describes the barriers in career progress of tourism women in Malaysia. Long hours culture, mobility and old boy network were identified as the independent variables of the study. According to the literature of the study, it is determined that the individual factors, social factors and organizational factors influence in career advancement of women in tourism industry.

3.0 Methodology

Study utilized a structured questionnaire in gathering data required for the research. The questionnaire survey carried out among 160 women in tourism careers. The sample was selected based on convenience. SPSS software utilized to analyze the data. Data gathered were analyzed based on descriptive statistics.

Table 1: Operational variables of the study are mentioned as follows.

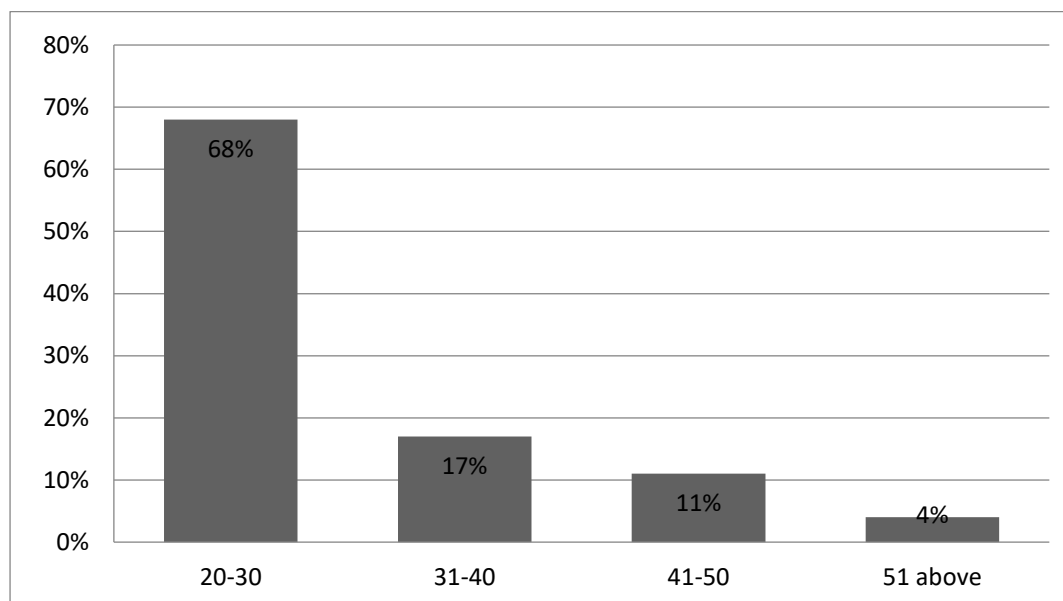
Variable	Indicator	Measurement
Career advancement	Recruitment and selection	5 point likert scale
	Reward and promotion	
	Equal opportunity	
Organisational factors	Monitoring	5 point likert scale
	Job characteristics	
	Lack of support	
Social factors	Responsibilities	5 point likert scale
	Social network	
Individual factors	Knowledge	5 point likert scale
	Confidence	

(Source: Author constructed through literature)

4.0 Findings

The statistical analysis of the collected data is discussed in this chapter.

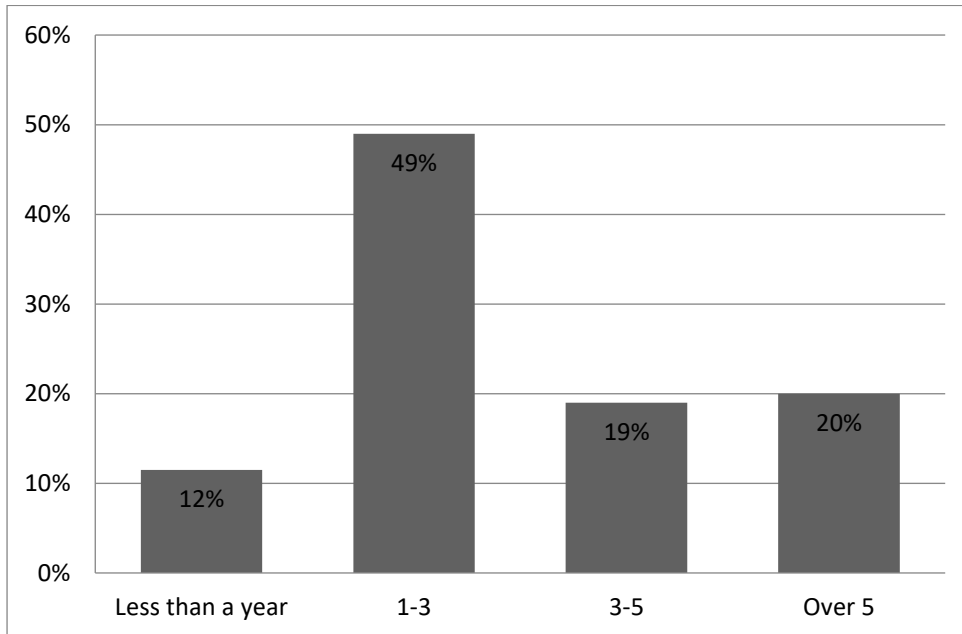
Figure 1: Age of Respondents



(Source: author constructed from the data)

Figure 1 indicates that the majority of the respondents are between 20-30 years of age recording 68%. There were 17% respondents from the 31-40 age category.

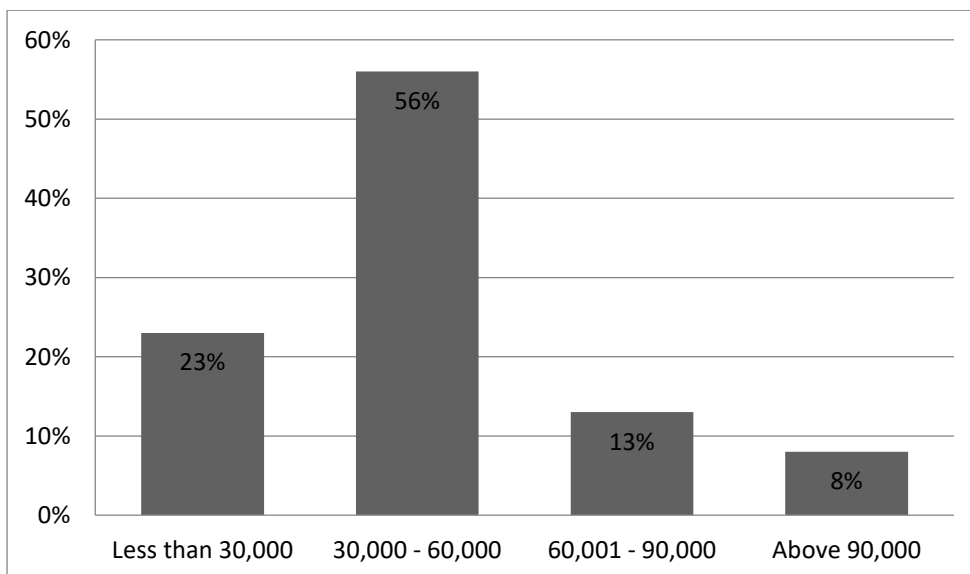
Figure 2: Number of Year Employed in Tourism



(Source: author constructed from the data)

Figure 2 indicates number of years the respondents employed in tourism industry. The majority of the respondents are employed in tourism between 1-3 years recording 49%. 20% of the respondents were employed in tourism over five years.

Figure 3: Level of Income of the Respondents



(Source: author constructed from the data)

Figure 3 indicates the income level of the respondents. According to the statistics, there 56% of the respondents in LKR 30,000-60,000 income level where 23% earn less than LKR 30,000. 8% of the respondents earn above LKR 90,000.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha for Variables

Variable	Resulting Level	Number of Items	Conclusion
Individual factors	0.865	7	Acceptable ($\alpha > 0.7$)
Social factors	0.908	7	Acceptable ($\alpha > 0.7$)
Organizational factors	0.735	7	Acceptable ($\alpha > 0.7$)
Women career advancement	0.871	6	Acceptable ($\alpha > 0.7$)

(Source: author constructed from the data)

As shown in table 2, it displays that all the Cronbach Alpha coefficients for all the dimensions in the model is greater than 0.7. Therefore the model is reliable.

Table 3: Correlations

		WCP	IF	SF	OF	CA
IF	Pearson Correlation	.438	1	.720**	.470**	.403*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008		.000	.004	.016
	N	100	100	100	100	100
SF	Pearson Correlation	.462*	.720**	1	.735**	.563**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	.000		.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
OF	Pearson Correlation	.500**	.470**	.735**	1	.717**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.004	.000		.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
CA	Pearson Correlation	.692*	.403*	.563**	.717**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	.016	.000	.000	
	N	100	100	100	100	100

(Source: author constructed from the data)

It is concluded that there are correlations between the variables of the study in women career advancement. There is a positive correlation among the each variable in the study where the association between the variables is between 0.3 – 0.7.

5.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

Women who employed in the tourism industry are facing numerous challenges in their career development. Individual, social and organizational factors are influencing women in the hospitality industry. Even though there is a positive encouragement in the industry in relation to the women employment in tourism, there is a significant indiscretion in providing opportunities for women to reach the higher management level. 26% degree of the study represents the influence of individual factors in career advancement of the women. Among them; lack of management experience, sexual harassments, inadequate knowledge on job role, and lack of confidence among women to perform male traits in careers are identified. The second largest contributor, social factors included high childcare responsibilities, stereotypes about women's commitment at work, lack of support from family, lack of social network, women with children considered as a liability, and women's democratic style is not effective in managing challenging tasks are the key factors. Lack of equity, lack of mentoring, irregular work hours, lack of acceptance of women as good managers, lack of role models, lack of support systems at work and lack of women acceptance in a masculine work culture are counted as the organizational factors influencing women career advancement. Apart from the individual, social and organizational factors; there is a significant influence of challenges related to work life balance in women career advancement in tourism and hospitality industry. Primary role as a mother, housewife, co-partner in earning are different roles that are to be managed by women. The support from family members, flexible working hours, equity in promotion considerations, opportunities in training and development, safe work environment and culture are the fundamentals of women empowerment and career advancement in the tourism industry.

Women employment and empowerment in tourism industry have been identified as an important aspect in the development of tourism industry. Even though there are a significant number of challenges in women employment in tourism industry, there are several actions and aspects to be utilized in developing women career advancement in tourism industry. Women entrepreneurship development, tourism education development, community acceptance of tourism and women's leadership in tourism identified as key facets to face the most challenges of women in tourism. Though, entrepreneurship culture is fairly new to Sri Lanka, there are many institutes and individuals work in developing entrepreneurship culture and encourage publics to participate in initiatives. This has been identified in social empowerment as well. There are several projects by government and private sector for women entrepreneurship development. The government should support women entrepreneurs in their business development which is essential in managing family, finances and personal life of women in Sri Lanka. Homestay units, Airbnb, guiding, souvenir retails, and culinary tourism are some of the tourism business areas potentials for women.

Further, the education opportunities must be provided for every skill level and management level of tourism opening avenues for women employment. This starts at the secondary education and higher education where more practical exposure to be encouraged for vocational development. Continuous learning opportunities must be provided for the women at any social level at any age without discrimination. Moreover, social acceptance of women

in tourism industry must be developed at the organizational cultures and also in the society at large. Awareness programs and public relation activities by tourism authorities would be supported in developing a positive image and social acceptance for women in the tourism industry.

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