

Chapter 4: Participation of Women in Green Tourism

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the role of women in green tourism and sustainable tourism development. The terms ecotourism” and “green tourism” are often used interchangeably, especially as they relate to sustainable tourism development. Gender concerns in tourism in general and women empowerment and its impact on green tourism are explored. While implementing green tourism has brought about both positive and negative impacts on women development, there are barriers that inhibit women from participating effectively. These barriers include limited information on the sector, lack of education in financial and investment strategies, stiff competition from men, poor access to land ownership, among others. However, the major challenges for gender equity in tourism include access to and control of sectors of the economy that generates income. Green tourism can contribute to gender equality if empowerment policies are put in place.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this chapter are to increase the reader’s knowledge and understanding of:

1. Green tourism and sustainable tourism development;
2. Gender issues in green tourism development;
3. Empowerment of women in green tourism; and
4. Impact of green tourism on women.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a fast-growing industry worldwide. It is utilised as a tool for job creation and for increasing domestic and foreign investment. Sustainability is of great concern and a major issue when it comes to tourism and hospitality industry. Sustainable tourism rests on three pillars, namely environmental, social and economic sustainability. Participation of women in these three pillars of sustainable tourism is very important because more women than men are employed in this sector. Although women tend to be concentrated in the lowest paid and lowest status jobs in tourism in general, they perform a large amount of unpaid work in family tourism businesses. Despite women activism and policies such as affirmative action and quota systems instituted

by governments worldwide, there continues to be under representation of women leaders in all sectors of the economy worldwide.

The Global Report on Women in Tourism (2011) also notes that in terms of employment women are well represented but tend to be working at a service or clerical rather than professional or decision-making level in all sectors of the economy. The same report also notes in that entrepreneurial sector, women are almost twice as likely to be employers in the tourism industry than in other sectors and often employ more women than men. While tourism often contributes to community development and provides opportunities for women's self-employment, the same report finds that women are contributing a large amount of unpaid work in tourism family businesses, especially when compared to other sectors, hence the need for women to be empowered.

Zimbabwe is a patriarchal society where women are subordinate to men (FAO, 2017). Women are responsible for performing household duties such as cooking, cleaning and caring for children and other family members. About 60% of the women participate in the labour force against a figure of 74.3% men (*ibid.*). There is enough justification for the need to empower women in the tourism industry. The tourism industry is heavily reliant on its natural environment and sustaining and enhancing that environment must be a key long-term objective for the industry. Sustainable tourism is an all-encompassing term that can also be applied to many green tourism practices, although a sustainable tourism operation would also include social and economic principles and green environmental practices. There is also a growing market for green products and in the tourism industry, the green tourist is becoming increasingly interested in ensuring that their holiday experiences are undertaken sustainably and that environmental management and sustainability principles are adopted and evident in the service provision. Women can play a big role in providing such green products and services.

The chapter presents the definitions of green and sustainable tourism, the drivers of tourism, women's participation and gender issues in green tourism, positive and negative benefits of green tourism and makes recommendations for the empowerment of women in green tourism and sustainable tourism.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and

improves the well-being of local people”. As such, eco-tourism is an aspect of sustainable development. It rests on the principles of minimising the impact, promoting biodiversity, building environmental awareness and respecting local culture. The primary attractions for eco-tourists are flora, fauna and cultural heritage. Eco-tourism is described as a more “alternative’ and “hard” form of tourism that is primarily nature-based. It must, in some way, assist with conservation efforts for biodiversity and involve the participation of local indigenous people and cultures in a way that protect their quality of life and sustains their well-being. It should involve a learning experience and be carried out in an ecologically sustainable way. Ecotourism involves people travelling to endangered environments or locations where the ecosystem is overly fragile, offering them some type of education regarding the local ecosystem and offering solutions as to how it can be better preserved.

The term “green tourism” is sometimes used interchangeably with the term “ecotourism”. Green tourism implies taking concrete steps to conserve natural resources, protect plants and wildlife and must contribute to the well-being of local communities. It is a term that can be applied to any form of tourism that relates to the natural environment and cultural heritage of an area or that undertakes good environmental management (or green) practice.

Green tourism is a form of ecotourism. It is low-impact tourism with an eye toward protecting the environment and culture of an area. Green tourism aims at protecting green environment with concepts of green consumption activities, to achieve social responsibility, economic development and ecological sustainability.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ACTIVITY

Most researchers agree that a successful sustainable tourism activity should have the following characteristics (Ecotourism Association of Australia, 1998):

1. Dependent on the natural environment;
1. Is ecologically sustainable;
2. Contributes to conservation;
3. Features interpretation and education;
4. Incorporates cultural considerations; and
5. There is a net return/benefit to the local community.

Any tourism activity must exhibit those characteristics for it to be termed sustainable.

CRITERIA FOR SUSTAINABLE GREEN TOURISM ACTIVITY

All green tourism activities need to show evidence of preventing or minimising impacts to the environment. The above characteristics of sustainable tourism apply to green tourism activities. However, there are three special considerations for a tourism practice to be considered “green [and these are:

1. The wise use of resources such as raw materials, water and energy;
- b. The prevention of pollution (air, land and water); and
- c. The protection and, where possible, the enhancement of biodiversity.

If a tourism activity meets these three criteria, then it qualifies to be called a green tourism activity.

A vacation can also be greened and there are many ways of greening up a vacation. Green tourism activities range from recycling and grey water systems to tents on tree house-like platforms with a rain forest canopy. Simple efforts, such as keeping to designated pathways, eating where locally grown cuisine is served and visiting cultural areas, instead of typical tourist attractions, can go a long way toward “greening up” a standard vacation. In all these activities, women can play a major role in green tourism.

A very green holiday can be spent studying the local flora, fauna and cultural heritage of the area and learning ways to protect and preserve it. Guides, tours and wildlife-viewing platforms help tourists experience all that an area must offer while making little or no impact on the environment. There also are trips available in which vacationers take an active part in improving the local area by working to preserve the natural habitat, helping to build a school or performing other services that benefit the area. These vacations can be hard work, but many people find them to be very rewarding and interesting learning experiences.

PRINCIPLES OF ECOTOURISM APPLICABLE TO GREEN TOURISM

Butler (1992) outlined eight key principles of ecotourism as follows:

1. It must be consistent with a positive environmental ethic, fostering preferred behaviour;
2. It does not denigrate the resource. There is no erosion of resource integrity;
3. It concentrates on intrinsic rather than extrinsic values;
4. It is bio-centric rather than homocentric in philosophy, in that an ecotourist accepts nature largely on its terms, rather than significantly transforming the environment for personal convenience;

5. It must benefit the resource. The environment must experience a net benefit from the activity, although there are often spin-offs of social, economic, political, or scientific benefits;
6. It is first-hand experience with the natural environment;
7. There is, in ecotourism, an expectation of gratification measured in appreciation and education, not in thrill-seeking or physical achievement;
8. There are high cognitive (informational) and effective (emotional) dimensions to the experience, requiring a high level of preparation from both leaders and participants.

DRIVERS FOR GREEN TOURISM

There are several factors that push or drive the need and demand for green tourism. These factors include the following:

1. Environment conservation is receiving high profile coverage in media. There is a worldwide societal consciousness about nature, protection and appreciation.
2. At the individual level there is a growing interest for the need to “reconnect” with nature and to seek out experiences of a more spiritual and thought-provoking nature coupled with physically challenging experiences.
3. There is increasing pressure in the workplace for conserving the environment with companies being encouraged to set up environment friendly practices that reduce pollution and generally save the nature. Many companies have set up Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) departments responsible for reducing the negative impacts of industrial operations on the environment.
4. At the global level, there is improved access to the countryside and more free time and disposable income for an increased number of people.
5. Rural and agricultural communities in remote areas of the world are increasingly becoming interesting vacation destinations. There is a growing recognition and interest in preserving heritage and culture of such communities

In other words, green tourism, does not necessarily mean the leisure time spent in tourism sites with comforts and contributes to local environment, culture or economy, but on the contrary, it is also an adventure to balance the relationship between people and the environment in the sense of physical and emotional.

There is growing concern with issues of sustainable environment practices. Green tourism represents a new paradigm that requires holistic ecological approaches or strategies that effectively address the needs of tourism consumers and meeting the needs of suppliers of tourism services while, at the same time, maintaining sustainable environment. The international tourism industry has grown to include alternative types of tourism, one of the most popular being ecotourism. Green tourism is an aspect of ecotourism. The global environmental movement of the late 1970s stimulated the growth of ecotourism and by the 1990s, ecotourism had become one of the fastest growing alternative tourism industries.

GENDER ISSUES IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM

The Global Report on Women in Tourism was launched in March 2011. The report highlighted the following findings:

1. Women make up a large proportion of the formal tourism workforce
2. Women are well represented in service and clerical level jobs, but poorly represented at a professional level;
3. Women in tourism are typically earning 10% to 15% less than their male counterparts;
4. The tourism sector has almost twice as many women employers as other sectors;
5. 20% of tourism ministers worldwide are women;
6. Women make up a much higher proportion of own-account workers in tourism than in other sectors; and
7. A large amount of unpaid work is being carried out by women in family tourism businesses.

While tourism often contributes to community development and provides opportunities for women's self-employment, the Global Report found that women were contributing a large amount of unpaid work in tourism family businesses, especially when compared to other sectors. It is important that gender is considered by proponents of ecotourism for three major reasons:

1. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Number 5 is "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". The engagement of women in tourism in general, and green tourism in particular, is essential to the realisation of this goal.

2. Women play a big role in heritage and culture preservation. Participation of women in all activities of sustainable tourism and green tourism in particular is of great importance.
3. More women than men are found in rural and agricultural areas. Gender issues are important to promote good natural resource management that protects key resources upon which ecotourism is based.

It is important to consider gender to ensure that ecotourism and green tourism initiatives benefit from the skills and knowledge of a broad range of members at the local community levels.

Gender equity is recognised as a basic human right. It is endorsed in the SDGs and seen as a key principle by many development partners who fund ecotourism initiatives in developing countries around the globe. According to this rationale, women and men should both participate in decision-making fora concerning ecotourism development and management. They should share equitably the benefits flowing from ecotourism initiatives. A gender-sensitive approach to tourism can, therefore, be seen as in the interests of all tourism stakeholders, whether their main motivation is conservation, equity, or business success.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is a specialised agency of the United Nations. It is committed to enhancing the positive impact of tourism on the development of women. By so doing it contributes to SDG Number 5. In furtherance of this commitment, the UNWTO dedicated the World Tourism Day in 2007 to the theme of “tourism opens doors for women”. It also organised a forum on Women in Tourism at the 2008 edition of the Berlin Tourism Fair. Ever since, the UNWTO has been working closely with UN Women to bring gender issues to the forefront of the tourism industry. It does this through its Ethics and Social Responsibility Programme, in partnership with UN Women. Through this partnership, it promotes gender equality and women’s empowerment and encourages member states to mainstream gender issues in their respective tourism policies.

BARRIERS TO WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN GREEN TOURISM

Women participation in green tourism is hampered by several entry barriers to the industry. These barriers include limited information on the sector, lack of education in financial and investment strategies, stiff competition from men, poor access to land ownership, among others.

Major challenges for gender equity in tourism include access to and control of sectors of the economy that generate income. This observation is true for Kenya as well. Barry (2012) observed that most women in Kenya, as elsewhere in the developing world, are overburdened by culturally defined roles, such as water-fetching, child-rearing and housework. She noted that these daily chores are essential for their survival, but do not generate hard cash. By creating a venue for women to generate hard cash through ecotourism projects, these gender roles can become a thing of the past and help ease the physical burden on women.

THE ZIMBABWE GENDER POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

In 2017, Zimbabwe had a total population of 13 061 239, 52% of which were female (6 780 700) and 48% male (6 280 539) (FAO, 2017). Its urban population comprised 33% of the population, while 67% were rural. The revised 2013-2017 Zimbabwe National Gender Policy stated that women's political and economic empowerment is key to the country's economic development (*ibid.*). Its vision is for a Zimbabwe where there is equity between men and women, equally contributing and benefiting from the development of the country as equal partners (*ibid.*). A theme group, the National Gender Forum, coordinated by the United Nation Women's Organisation (UN Women) was formed to provide a platform for regular dialogue between government and civic society. It comprises academics, representatives of the private sector with interest in gender equity and the girl child and faith-based organisations (SADC, 2015). Through the Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF), the United Nations is working to achieve gender equality by implementing and monitoring laws and policies and empowering women and girls to actively participate in social activities (ZUNDAF, 2014).

These gender issues apply to women participation in green tourism. Green Tourism is a certification programme based in the UK. It works on the following principles of green tourism:

1. It should be profitable for business;
2. It should conserve and enhance the environment;
3. It should protect and support people and community; and
4. It should improve the visitor's experience.

Green tourism members are listed on their web site. Zimbabwe offers Green Tourism awards using the above criteria.

WOMEN AND EMPOWERMENT IN GREEN TOURISM

DEFINITIONS OF EMPOWERMENT

There are many definitions of empowerment. For the purposes of this chapter, empowerment is defined as the enhancement “of an individual’s or group’s capacity to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes” (Andrews, Barbera, Mickle and Novick, 2013). Women must be empowered socially, economically, psychologically and politically to effectively participate in green tourism.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The engagement of women in tourism in general and green tourism in particular is essential to the realisation of SDG Number 5. The engagement of women in all aspects of tourism activities is essential and considered vital. This aspect is acknowledged by the UNWTO. Theoretically, tourism development may contribute to gender equality. For this to happen women’s empowerment policies must be put in place. For women to participate effectively in green tourism development, they must be empowered.

DIMENSIONS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

With regards to tourism studies, empowerment can be classified into four dimensions of community capacity that include economic, social, psychological and political empowerment.

Scheyvens (1999) has identified and discussed these dimensions of empowerment. Given that development is multidimensional in nature, it is important to consider issues such as whether the local community derives financial or monetary benefits from ecotourism (Scheyvens, 2000).

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Economic empowerment happens when the local community has control over an ecotourism venture. As regards women, economic empowerment implies fair distribution of economic benefits of tourism activities by the local community. Economic empowerment can also be defined as “increasing fiscal means and power in a woman’s life such as increase in income and position in the household”. Rural tourism products include homestays, ecotourism, agrotourism, cultural and heritage-based tourism. All these tourism activities have the potential to enhance local community livelihoods. Snyman, 2015). One such alternative form of sustainable livelihood is ecotourism. The authors argue that the creation of income-generating activities for women through

ecotourism would help alleviate poverty, improve the status of women and promote sustainable development of the local communities.

As regards economic empowerment, available literature reveals that local women are often ignored in formal employment, especially when lodges and other ecotourism sites are established. Women miss out on formal employment opportunities in ecotourism, because social norms continue to restrict the type of economic activities in which women may engage. The discrimination of women in formal employment has been reported in Kenya (Mwangi, 2005). In her analysis of the social impact of ecotourism project in the Selenkei Ranch in Amboseli, Kajiado County, Mwangi found out that women were not employed at the conservancy as their role was to take care of children. Similar observations have been reported in Asia. Wilkinson and Pratiwi (1995) have established that women are overlooked when it comes to tour guiding in the Himalayas and Indonesia. Many women felt that they could not exploit this relatively lucrative economic opportunity, because the women who would be involved in such activities would be labelled as “prostitutes”. Sustainable tourism development can be realised if the local community actively participates in tourism activities and derive economic benefits from it. In summary, economic empowerment implies increasing fiscal means and power in a woman’s life.

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

A community that is politically empowered by ecotourism has a say on the development of any ecotourism project from the feasibility stage to implementation and monitoring. The various interest groups within a community, such as women and youths, need to have representation in the decision-making bodies. Mwangi (*ibid.*) also established that the attitude of male community members towards women is an important one because it determines the extent to which females can participate in decision-making at the conservancy. The reason given for excluding women in decision-making was that they were regarded as children. Thus, it is important not to assume that if women have benefited economically from an ecotourism venture, they will have greater voice within their communities and beyond (Scheyvens, 2000). Political empowerment implies that the voices of women must be heard and their concerns considered in the development of ecotourism projects. Locals, especially women and youth, should participate in the decision-making process.

SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Social empowerment can be defined as a situation in which a community’s sense of cohesion and integrity has been confirmed or strengthened by an

activity such as ecotourism. Sustainable tourism development can be realised if the local community actively participates in tourism activities and derive economic benefits from it.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

The term “psychological empowerment” refers to the extent to that “local community is optimistic about their future, has faith in the abilities of its residents, is relatively self-reliant and demonstrates pride in traditions and culture” (Scheyvens., 1999: 245-249). The recognition by outsiders towards the works of arts and crafts done by women increases their sense of community pride and it makes them participate in tourism activities with pride and enthusiasm. They gain respect within their communities, thereby improving their self-esteem.

IMPACT OF GREEN TOURISM ON WOMEN

Available tourism literature presents two perspectives on the impact of green tourism on women. One perspective is that green tourism has a positive impact on women, while the other perspective is that it has a negative impact on them.

POSITIVE IMPACT OF GREEN TOURISM ON WOMEN

Wearing and Larsen (1996) showed how ecotourism can empower local communities by giving them a sense of pride and awareness of the importance of their natural resources and control over their development. In many cases, women have a close connection with the physical environment of their community. Usually, it is women who have the know-how of producing crafts. They also have special knowledge of uses of various plants and walking routes. It, therefore, makes sense that women should be involved in managing green tourism projects. This would help improve their relative economic well-being. Scheyvens (*ibid.*) makes the same argument in his description of experiences from the developing world where women are empowered through their involvement in ecotourism.

Besides, there is ample empirical evidence to show that money in the hands of women benefits the livelihoods of the children in the community, such as increased expenditure on nutrition, clothing and schooling. Green tourism activities have the potential to provide formal and informal employment opportunities in areas in which women have existing skills, e.g., cultural performance and crafts. Women thus can gain respect for the roles they play

in continuing/reviving cultural practices. Green tourism activities can also provide women with employment in areas outside of traditional gender stereotypes. Such activities include tour guiding. Gainful employment in green tourism activities increase men's respect for their partners.

Participation of women in green tourism activities provides them with opportunities to gain confidence from interactions with people from outside their area. This may lead to husbands accepting that they need to engage in more domestic duties to support their income-earning wives

NEGATIVE IMPACT OF GREEN TOURISM ON WOMEN

Scheyvens (*ibid.*) argued that women do not benefit significantly from ecotourism projects. Sindiga (1995), holds similar views. However, in other cases, in terms of formal employment, local women are often ignored when lodges and other tourist sites are established. In many contexts, women miss out on formal employment opportunities in tourism, because social norms continue to restrict the type of economic activities in which women may engage (Scheyvens, 2000).

It has been observed that generally, men and women are unequally impacted by tourism. This view is expounded by Bolles (1997) who states that women's importance in the industry is often minimised or referenced primarily in terms of sex work. He argued that tourism becomes a vehicle for exploring the differences and commonalities among women. The status and remuneration of women's jobs are often inferior to that of men. When women's work is associated with cooking and cleaning, they receive no or little pay. Many women are expected to work a "double day", meeting both the demands of formal employment and unpaid domestic services. Women may feel that they are neglecting their children and their religious or social obligations. Communal benefits may be distributed to male heads of households, ignoring the needs of female-headed households and polygamous societies. Competition for ecotourism income among different groups in a community undermines social cohesion. Vested interests dominate park management boards, ecotourism associations and other decision-making bodies, making it difficult for women to voice their opinions. Competition associated with ecotourism partners may exacerbate existing fissures within communities and lead to social disharmony (Scheyvens, 2007:191-192).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN GREEN TOURISM

For women to participate fully in the green tourism sector, they must be empowered. Business procedures for registration must be simplified and incubator programmes set up for activities related to green tourism. For ecotourism to be helpful, there must be proper management of land use to avoid such things as loss of pasture. Ecotourism must benefit the home community, if it does not then it's not ecotourism. Theoretically, tourism development may contribute to gender equality. For this to happen, women's empowerment policies must be put in place.

There is a wrong perception among ecotourism researchers that gender issues will be addressed if ecotourism is approached through a participatory planning approach in which community development is targeted. However, as Scheyvens (*ibid.*) argues, much deeper appreciation of the complex nature of communities is needed before ecotourism ventures are implemented. She further stated that direct efforts must be made to support poorer, less powerful groups, that often include women, if ecotourism is to be effective in meeting conservation and development goals. However, in past development initiatives, women's voices have often been ignored as development consultants, researchers, and government officers seek the opinions of chiefs, the local elite and entrepreneurs, the vast majority of whom are men. To translate the rhetoric of sustainable management of natural resources into reality, local people, including women, children, the elderly and indigenous minorities, must be allowed to actively participate in the decision-making process.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the role of women in green tourism. Definitions of green tourism and sustainable ecotourism were presented. It was highlighted that the terms green tourism and ecotourism are often used interchangeably. Characteristics and principles of ecotourism applicable to green tourism were presented and discussed. The chapter discussed the various issues relating to gender and empowerment of women in green tourism. Both positive and negative impacts of green tourism on women were discussed. It concludes by making recommendations for effective participation of women in green tourism.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the characteristics of sustainable green tourism activity.

2. What criteria is used to determine if a tourism activity is a green activity?
3. Discuss the various dimensions of empowerment of women in green tourism.
4. What are the positive and negative impacts of green tourism activities on women?
5. Discuss gender issues related to the participation of women in green tourism activities.