

Original Article

Livelihood of Women Entrepreneurs through Tourism: A Study in Murshidabad, West Bengal

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Abstract

Tourism sector is providing a huge platform for generating livelihood opportunities. And now a days it is one of the fast-growing dynamic sectors in the whole world for creating employment and economic development. The local entrepreneurs are getting options to create livelihood and generate income. It also providing a place for women entrepreneurs to take lead and underscores their role in economic opportunities and improve their socio-economic conditions. The study area has its rich cultural heritage and historical significance as erstwhile capital of Bengal during the Mughal period which attracts national and international tourists over the years. So, this paper will discuss about the role of tourism in women entrepreneur's livelihood and different tourism-based products sold by the women entrepreneurs in tourist areas of Murshidabad district of West Bengal.

Keywords: Livelihood, Tourism, Women Entrepreneurs

Introduction

Livelihood is the basic need that every individual required for sustaining their well-being. And for generating livelihood tourism sector is providing immense opportunities of employment generation. Tourism is recognized as an important tool for enhancing the sustainable livelihood of rural and semi urban areas. In developing country like India tourism have contributed significantly for poverty alleviation and income generation option for economic development. Tourism is providing a platform for the enterprise to develop where women driven entrepreneurship is getting an opportunity to generation income in this sector. Women led enterprises recognizes women empowerment enabling to achieve economic stability and financial independence. Livelihood generation through women entrepreneurship in tourism sector is providing diverse opportunities to earn their livelihood and benefits the society as a whole. The study will be conducted in Murshidabad district of West Bengal as this district has its rich historical signification as the erstwhile capital of Bengal during the Mughal era. Its rich cultural heritage, architectural marvels, vibrant crafts traditions make it a prominent destination for tourism. So, for this district tourism serve as a major driver of economic growth for offering significant livelihood opportunities through entrepreneurship.

Women entrepreneurs gets the platform to start their small-scale enterprises in this tourist spots. Handmade crafts, food stalls, local artifacts are the enterprises operated by the women entrepreneurs the products are mostly self-made as per the demand of the tourists visiting that tourist spots. So, this women entrepreneur gets the opportunity to sustain their livelihood by making small investment and getting a good profit to enhance their economic conditions. Entrepreneurship enhances the economic empowerment of women and gives women decision-making power and financial security (Verma et al., 2022). Tourism is providing a good source of livelihood generating opportunities and influence women to take up entrepreneurship along with empower women to take lead in greater participation, process in decision-making processes which increase their self-confidence and ability to take part to influence policy and planning at the local level (Buttner and Moore, 1997; Scheyvens, 2000).



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Women entrepreneurs will improve the rural conditions by making a significant contribution to raising the standard of living of their families (Tiwari, 2019). So, the women are engaging in entrepreneurial activities along with that managing their livelihood as well as contributing to local economy by remaining within the tourism landscape.

Tourism in Murshidabad

The district carries its historical importance which attracts tourists from all over the world. Its historical architectures, monuments, heritage site creates the place more attractive. Some of the major tourist places are Hazarduari Palace, Imambara, Motijheel, Kathgola Bagan, Katra Masjid, Nasipur Rajbari, Cossimbazar Rajbari, Kiriteshwari Temple. Murshidabad district has tremendous potential for tourism due to its rich cultural significance but they still remain certain lack and need to explore more and government need to take certain more interventions and initiatives (Sinha & Murdia, 2018).

Tourism and Women Entrepreneurs

Tourism created a platform for women to take up small scale enterprises and start their business to earn their livelihood. In Murshidabad district mostly the people are engaged in agricultural activities, labour works for earning their daily livelihood. In case of women mostly they are engaged in daily domestic household's work, support in agricultural work, livestock rearing but for them there is no specific source of income or earning minimum. But when they are taking the chance to start their enterprise in their local areas and getting consumers it motivated them to take it up in a large-scale entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is not only good for the economic condition of society but also good for the women's own families. Women are starting their work to be self-dependent (Kashyap & Boredoloi, 2020). Tourism plays significant role in improving women's livelihood, income, and social status (Bansal, 2011). This entrepreneurial satisfaction creates subjective sense of fulfilment of purpose and well-being that entrepreneurs derive from their business activities that leads to financial stability, autonomy, social recognition, and alignment with personal values (Walker & Brown, 2004).

Methodology

Objectives of the study

1. To identify various types of Tourism-based enterprises among Women Entrepreneurs.
2. To study the impact of tourism in women entrepreneur's livelihoods.

Study area

The study is conducted in Lalbagh area of Murshidabad district of West Bengal

Sampling

Researcher has identified 30 women entrepreneurs engaged in tourism-based enterprises through purposive sampling techniques.

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design to understand the role of tourism in generating livelihood opportunity among women entrepreneurs and also to identify various types of tourism-based enterprises run by the women in Murshidabad district.

Tools of Data Collection

The researcher collected information from the women entrepreneurs through a structured interview schedule.

Data processing and Analysis

Data collected were analysed using simple statistical tools

Results and Discussions

The women entrepreneurs of this area mostly run three different types of enterprises i.e. Handicraft product shop, Local food stalls and small retail shops. Among the 30 women entrepreneurs, 50% of the respondents are mostly selling handicraft products made from jute, clay, bamboo etc. Around 33% are engaged in selling local food items and 17% are engaged in small retail shops. So, it can be said that women entrepreneurs are mostly running handicrafts shops in this tourist areas.



Fig.1: Different Tourism based enterprises

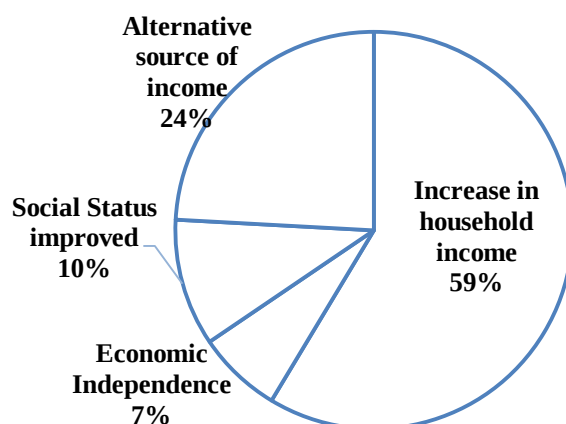


Fig.2: Tourism impact on Women Entrepreneurs

The data indicates that 59% of the women entrepreneurs responded that impact of tourism on their livelihood is by increase in household earning. While 24% of the responded said it gives them alternative sources of income on the other hand only 10% and 7% of the women entrepreneurs responded improvement in their social status and economic independence they have gained.

Over all findings, suggested that women entrepreneurs in the tourist areas of Murshidabad mostly runs three types of businesses in which most women sell handicrafts products the reason stated by them are less amount of investment in the starting and products are made by them. And tourists prefer buying handicrafts products made of jute, clay, bamboo in these areas so it motivated them more to invest more on this type of business. On the other aspect Tourism plays an important role in women entrepreneurs' livelihood as it has increased their earning source and providing an alternative source of income which is helpful for their wellbeing. Also, by getting the opportunity to start a small-scale business in the tourist areas provided them economic independence i.e. contribution in the main source of income. All this factors slowly contributing to the improvement in the social status of the women in the society.

Conclusions

It can be concluded by saying that in this study Tourism serves as platform that transform the women entrepreneur's livelihood and created diverse options in Murshidabad. The tourism growth has created opportunities for them to participate more in income generating activities which can improve their economic status and contribution in the household income. However, there also have several challenges faces by the women entrepreneurs some of them are financial problems, seasonal tourism demand, lack of government interventions. So, for promoting women led enterprises in the tourism sector more institutional and government support is needed by providing access to finance, training programs for skill development. So that women entrepreneurs can expand their business more and improve their livelihood conditions and can contribute towards sustainable development in this region.



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