



Challenges of women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector of Punjab

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Abstract

This study investigates the primary challenges confronting women entrepreneurs within Punjab's dynamic tourism sector. Utilizing a quantitative research approach, primary data was collected from 160 women entrepreneurs across various districts of Punjab using a structured questionnaire and purposive sampling. This research aims to establish their demographic profile, including age, educational attainment, marital status, and business types, and to identify and quantify the specific obstacles they face. The paper seeks to provide a foundational understanding of these challenges, advocating for targeted policy interventions and support mechanisms to foster a more enabling environment for women's entrepreneurial growth in Punjab's burgeoning tourism landscape.

Keywords -Women Entrepreneur, Tourism Sector, Punjab, Challenges ,Primary data

Introduction

In recent decades, the traditionally male-dominated perspective on entrepreneurship has changed significantly. The emergence of female entrepreneurs has become a significant worldwide phenomenon that is upending established social conventions, stimulating innovation, and changing economies. Women's entrepreneurship is becoming more widely acknowledged as a critical driver of inclusive growth, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development, far from being a minor footnote in economic discourse. An individual who starts, plans, and runs a business endeavor while taking on the related risks in the hopes of turning a profit or having a positive social effect is referred to as a woman entrepreneur. Nonetheless, the distinct incentives and obstacles that women entrepreneurs encounter are frequently what set them apart. While some women share

the same economic goals as men, such as achieving financial independence, innovating, and taking advantage of market opportunities, many women are also inspired by the desire for more autonomy, the ability to balance work and family obligations, and a desire to make a positive impact on their communities. With its rich cultural legacy and varied landscapes, India has enormous potential in the tourism sector, which is a major generator of economic growth and employment worldwide. With its thriving culture, historical landmarks, and religious tourism, Punjab in particular offers an ideal environment for business endeavours. Even while more women are entering the workforce, they are still under-represented in entrepreneurial positions, especially in industries like tourism. Numerous issues that are unique to women are frequently blamed for this discrepancy. In addition to advancing gender equality, empowering women entrepreneurs in the tourism industry may unlock unrealised economic potential, support local development, and enhance the visitor experience by bringing in a variety of viewpoints and products. Women entrepreneurs make a substantial contribution to economic growth on a global scale. But even if there are more women-owned enterprises in India, there is still a significant disparity when compared to their male counterparts. This is exacerbated by the fact that a significant number of women-led businesses operate in low-income industries. Although there is acknowledged potential for entrepreneurship in Punjab, especially considering the significant number of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) who might present an opportunity, women nevertheless encounter distinct challenges. Women are frequently restricted to household responsibilities by traditional social standards, which makes it difficult for them to undertake business endeavours. The idea of the "double journey," in which women balance work and home duties, is a common occurrence that causes stress and restricts their capacity to give their enterprises their whole attention.

Literature review

Women's entrepreneurial prospects are frequently restricted by gender prejudices, since conventional roles may deter women from pursuing economic endeavours (Akter et al., 2024). Cultural beliefs may put up obstacles, resulting in a lack of community and family support—two things that are crucial for successful entrepreneurship. Women entrepreneurs in the tourism industry face obstacles connected to gender that hinder their success. Their capacity to succeed in a primarily male workplace is hampered by these issues, which include cultural hurdles and a lack of support for entrepreneurs (Siam, 2023). Women entrepreneurs in the tourism industry encounter obstacles such as restricted financial resources, gender prejudice, a lack of representation in leadership positions, and cultural norms that prevent them from participating, which affects their capacity to successfully promote community development and economic progress (Francis et al., 2024). The lack of digital skills, restricted access to digital equipment and training, dependence on family and staff support, and worries about safety, security, and work-life balance are just a few of the major obstacles that women entrepreneurs in the tourist industry must overcome in order to expand their businesses (Khoo et al., 2024). Gender-specific obstacles that women entrepreneurs in the tourist industry must overcome include the prevalence of male-owned enterprises, restricted access to resources, and social privileges accorded to men. These obstacles make it more difficult for them to successfully launch and expand women-owned tourist businesses (Ntanjana & Mangwane, 2020). Despite their substantial contributions to economic growth and community well-being, women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector face gender-specific challenges such as lack of representation, restricted access to financial resources, institutional barriers, and societal norms that limit their entrepreneurial potential (Ngumbela, 2023).

Objectives of the study

- ☐ To examine the demographic profile of women entrepreneur in the tourism industry of Punjab
- ☐ To identify the major challenges faced by women entrepreneur in the tourism sector of Punjab
- ☐ To suggest measures and recommendations to overcome from these challenges

Methodology

This study used a quantitative research approach, administering a structured questionnaire to 160 women entrepreneurs in various districts of Punjab who are actively involved in the tourism industry (e.g., homestays, tour operators, Bed and Breakfast Unit, handicraft sales). A purposive sampling method was used to identify women entrepreneurs. The collected data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics, primarily percentages, to present the demographic profile of the respondents and the prevalence of identified challenges.

Findings

Demographic Profile of respondents

Table 1.1 Age group of respondents

S.no	Age Group No.	No. of women	%
1	Below 30 years	30	18.75
2	30-45 years	87	54.37
3	Above 45 years	43	26.88
	Total	160	100

According to the data presented, the majority of women entrepreneurs in Punjab's tourist industry are in their prime working years, with the largest group (54.37%) being between the ages of 30 and 45. While 18.75% of entrepreneurs are under 30, showing a hopeful entry of younger women into the industry, 26.88% of entrepreneurs are over 45, demonstrating continued participation in company. This distribution shows that women in the region's tourist business have a strong entrepreneurial drive at all phases of their careers.

Table 1.2 Educational Qualifications of Respondents

S.no	Educational	No. of women	%
1	High School	19	11.875%
2	Undergraduate	98	61.25%
3	Postgraduate & above	43	26.875%
	Total	160	100

According to the data on educational backgrounds, the vast majority of female entrepreneurs in Punjab's tourist industry have a solid academic background. While 26.875% of the respondents have studied postgraduate education or higher, more than 61% (61.25%) of the respondents have an undergraduate degree. Just 11.875% of them have finished high school, indicating that women in charge of tourism-related businesses in the area often have more education.

Table 1.3 Martial Status of Respondents

S.no	Marital Status	No. of women	%
1	Married	128	80%
2	Unmarried	19	11.875%
3	Divorced	5	3.125%
4	Widowed	8	5%
	Total	160	100

According to the marital status statistics presented, 80% of women entrepreneurs in Punjab's tourist industry are married, indicating that for the great majority, commercial endeavors are conducted in addition to marital duties. Widowed and divorced women make up lesser percentages at 5% and 3.125%, respectively, but unmarried women make up 11.875%. Married women make up the majority of this group, which emphasizes the importance of family relationships and the difficulty of striking a balance between the demands of entrepreneurship and household responsibilities.

Table 1.4 Location of Business

S.no	Location of Business	No. of women	%
1	Urban	105	65.62%
2	Rural	55	34.38%
	Total	160	100

Table 1.4 shows that 65.62% of the respondents, or a majority of women entrepreneurs in Punjab's tourism industry, run their companies in cities. On the other hand, rural areas are home to 34.38% of female entrepreneurs. According to this distribution, women play a substantial, albeit lesser, role in Punjab's expanding rural and agrotourism scene, even though metropolitan areas probably provide better developed infrastructure and market options for tourist endeavors.

Table 1.5 Type of Tourism business

S.no	Type of Tourism business	No. of women	%
1	Travel agents /Tour operator	118	73.75%
2	Handi crafts	20	12.5%
3	Bed and breakfast units	15	9.375%
4	Home stay	7	4.375%
	Total	160	100

According to the data in Table 1.5, the majority of women entrepreneurs in Punjab's tourism industry—a noteworthy 73.75%—work as tour operators or travel agents. This demonstrates a strong presence in the intermediate, service-oriented sector of the market. Homestays (4.375%), bed and breakfasts (9.375%), and handicrafts (12.5%) all have smaller percentages, indicating a varied but less focused interest in lodging and traditional craft-based tourist options.

Table 2- Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector

S.no	Challenges	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Limited Access to Finance/Capital:	29 (18.4%)	20 (12.1%)	5 (3.1%)	60 (37.6%)	46 (28.80%)
2	Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities (Work-Life Balance)	19 (11.9%)	22 (13.75%)	10 (6.25%)	43 (26.85%)	66 (41.25%)
3	Gender Bias and Societal Stereotypes:	20 (12.5%)	15 (9.375%)	16 (10%)	53 (33.125%)	56 (35%)
4	Lack of Marketing and Networking Opportunities:	9 (5.625%)	12 (7.5%)	6 (3.75%)	35 (21.875%)	98 (61.25%)
5	Inadequate Entrepreneurial Training and Skill Development	28 (17.5%)	5 (3.125%)	20 (12.5%)	58 (36.25%)	49 (30.625%)
6	Complex Bureaucracy and Government Formalities:	7 (4.375%)	22 (13.75%)	9 (5.625%)	38 (23.75%)	84 (52.5%)
7	Limited Access to Technology and Digital Resources	40 (25%)	15 (9.375%)	22 (13.75%)	55 (34.375%)	28 (17.5%)
8	Competition from Established Businesses (often male-dominated)	20 (12.5%)	9 (5.625%)	5 (3.125%)	48 (30%)	78 (48.75%)
9	Safety and Security Concerns (especially for tourism-related travel)	3 (1.875%)	4 (2.5%)	8 (5%)	25 (16.66%)	120 (75%)

Table 2 shows the different levels of agreement among respondents and provides a thorough overview of the difficulties experienced by female entrepreneurs in Punjab's tourist industry. "Safety and Security Concerns" was the most highly agreed-upon obstacle, with a remarkable 75% strongly agreeing, indicating a major problem for women in this field. Additionally, "Lack of Marketing and Networking Opportunities" received a high degree of agreement (61.25% strongly agree), highlighting challenges with connection and promotion. 52.5% of respondents strongly agreed that "Complex Bureaucracy and Government Formalities" was a significant problem, highlighting administrative obstacles. With a significant portion of entrepreneurs disagreeing or feeling neutral, challenges like "Limited Access to Technology and Digital Resources" (25% disagree/strongly disagree) and "Inadequate Entrepreneurial Training and Skill Development" (20.625% disagree/strongly disagree) elicit more mixed responses, indicating that these problems may not be as severe across the sample.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Sociocultural norms, economic inequality, and structural constraints are the main causes of the difficulties experienced by women entrepreneurs in Punjab's tourism industry. However, achieving the full potential of women as change agents and economic contributors requires acknowledging and removing these obstacles. A truly enabling environment for women to succeed as entrepreneurs in Punjab's thriving tourist sector may be established by putting in place focused financial assistance, pertinent skill development programs, strong mentorship networks, and proactive efforts to combat social prejudices. A more inclusive and equal society will be promoted in addition to the state's economic growth.

Reccomendations

Financial Inclusion: Create specialised financial solutions with streamlined application procedures and lower collateral needs for female business owners. Expand the public's knowledge of government initiatives like as Stand-Up India, MUDRA Yojana, and state-specific funding for women entrepreneurs. Urge women's self-help organisations and microfinance organisations to fund local tourist projects.

Socio-Cultural Support and Change: Start public awareness initiatives to dispel gender stereotypes and emphasise the social and economic contributions made by female entrepreneurs. Encourage flexible work schedules and offer childcare assistance to assist women in juggling their many responsibilities. Create mentoring programs so seasoned female business owners may advise and motivate newcomers.

Building Capacity and Developing Skills: Create and provide specialised training courses in digital literacy, marketing, financial management, tourist management, and customer service. Put an emphasis on real-world, experiential training that takes into account the unique requirements of women working in the tourist industry, particularly those in rural regions.

Policy and Regulatory Support: Make company licensing, compliance, and registration processes simpler. You may also want to create "single-window" clearance processes for female entrepreneurs. Give women-led tourist businesses tax breaks and subsidies, especially in undeveloped or underdeveloped regions.

Punjab can enable its female entrepreneurs to thrive in the tourist industry, making a substantial contribution to the state's economic growth and presenting its diverse cultural heritage to the world, by proactively tackling these obstacles.

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