

Investigation of the Hindrances Faced by Women in Contributing Towards the Growth of Wildlife Tourism Industry in Buea, Southwest Region, Cameroon

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Abstract

Wildlife tourism plays an important role in the Cameroonian economic growth, attracts investment, creates many job opportunities and enhances foreign currency entry into the market. The wildlife Tourism industry is witnessing a rapid investment growth to meet the demands of the tourists. Unfortunately, the long standing tradition of gender discrimination in Cameroon work-strength, especially in the tourism service sector might be a set-back. The reason which the execution of the study is a necessity, focused on exploring some of the set-backs women working in this industry are facing. The method used for data collection was based on the administration of two hundred and fifty questionnaires to a randomly selected population of women working in the wildlife tourism sector in Buea. The results has shown a significant link between office-boss gender and educational background ($R^2 = 0.625, P < 0.05$). In addition, the results has shown a significant link between women challenges and the effect of family duties on their career development ($\chi^2 = 29.669$ df=3, $P < 0.05$). The assessment of women work-performance recorded a respondent score of 68.92% and 31.08% on Good and Fair respectively. Moreover, a respondent score of 74.90% and 25.10% was recorded on 'Yes' and 'No' respectively on the effects of family duties to women career development. Also, the results recorded a respondent score of 68.53%, 24.70% and 6.77% on 'Good', 'Fair', and 'Poor' respectively on the work-performance of women at the managerial positions. Moreso, the study witnessed a respondent score of 33.86%, 32.67%, 19.12%, and 14.34% on communication, hotel management, transportation, and department of tourism respectively on the female work-strength. The respondent score of 33.47%, 32.27%, 23.11% and 11.16% was recorded on promotion, maternity, harassment, and low category professional positions on women office-workers respectively as challenges. However, the increase involvement of women in wildlife tourism industry would likely solve some of these challenges, consequently a more rapid growth for the sector would emerge.

Keywords: Wildlife tourism, Gender discrimination, Hotel management, Communication, Transportation

INTRODUCTION

World tourism has demonstrated dynamic growth over the last century and shows a promising future in the decades to come (UNWTO, 2007). Global tourism reached an all-time high in 2006 as international tourist arrivals totalled 846 million, generating US\$733 billion in international tourism receipts (UNWTO, 2007). The tourism industry transcends political, economic, cultural, and environmental boundaries, and as such, it has significant implications for destination communities, particularly those more dependent on tourism as a primary source of revenue and economic stability. Shopping is a favourite tourist activity and an increasingly important component of the leisure travel experience (Kim & Littrell, 1999). Shopping provides a source of entertainment, adventure, and discovery of unusual objects (Anderson & Littrell, 1995) and "tourists not only invest time toward shopping during their travels, but they also spend approximately one-third of their total tourism expenditures on retail purchases" (Yu & Littrell, 2003). Shopping opportunity is also accredited as a major attraction that draws tourists to travel abroad, particularly to lower-income or developing countries, where the prices of goods are generally low (Kim & Littrell, 1999) and where the selection of goods is often different from that at home.

Among the most important forms of increasing women's participation in public life and increase their participation in the Jordanian labor market, where women entered in all sectors, including the tourism sector, which is considered. The tourism industry of the biggest international economic sectors in terms of size and importance, which has become a tourism largest shareholder industry in the global GDP, and in Jordan's tourism sector plays an important role in economic growth in Jordan and attract investment, as well as job creation and the introduction of hard currency, providing 42,000 tourism industry jobs. However, do not exceed the proportion of female participation in excess of 10%, so it was a national strategy for tourism targets for the years 2011-2015 to raise the level of women's participation in the labor force 15% (Al Zoubi & Alkharoof, 2015).

Women play a key role in trade in Africa and will be essential to Africa's success in exploiting its trade potential. Women make a major contribution to trade in most African countries through their involvement in the production of tradable goods as cross-border traders and as managers and owners of firms involved in trade. In

many countries in Africa, the majority of small farmers are women, and they produce crops such as maize, cassava, cotton, and rice that have enormous potential for increased trade between African countries and with the global market. Women are also involved in providing services across borders, such as education, health, and professional services, including accountancy and legal services. Hundreds of thousands of women cross borders in Africa every day to deliver goods from areas where they are relatively cheap to areas in which they are in shorter supply (Brenton *et al.*, 2013).

Women's participation in economic activity brings benefits at both the micro and macro levels. In order to be employed, women need skills for which there is a demand in the labour market. It is normally expected that labour force participation rates increase with rising levels of education and training. Furthermore, in general, the more education one has, the greater one's individual income potential is (Majcher-Teleon & Slimène, 2009). Women's labour force participation rate is very low in Jordan. The activity rate in 2009 was 73.9% for men and 23.3% for women according to the ILO. Although the enrolment of females' at all educational levels still lags behind that of males, the educational gender gap is too small to explain the gender gap in labour force participation. Women's skills and qualifications are not utilised to their full extent in Jordan (Majcher-Teleon & Slimène, 2009).

Major challenges for gender equity include access and control of sectors of the economy that generate income. 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 study is focused on the exploration of some of the challenges women working in the tourism industry in Buea, the Republic of Cameroon are facing.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Description of the study area

Buea municipality is situated between longitude 9° 16' E and latitude 4° 9' N (Fitton *et al* 1983). The municipality is bounded to the north by tropical forest on the slope of mount Cameroon (4100m above sea level). The mountain range extends to the beautiful sandy beaches of Atlantic Ocean. The town also shares boundary with other major towns like Limbe to the South West, Tiko to the South East, Muyuka to the East and Idenau to the West. With an equatorial climate, temperature is moderate with a slight seasonal variation in the wet and dry season. Buea has a moderate economy with agricultural, administrative, business, tourism and the financial sector taking the central stage of the town. The area is composed of undulating high and low lands with many rocks and gravels due to volcanic eruptions. The soil type consists of basalts and is as a result of the first volcanic activity in the Fako Mountain area, which occurred in the cretaceous system. These soils have been weathered and partly covered by more recent deposits, thus the soils are black and in these areas are well drained due to the hilly nature of the terrain and the fact that they are free-draining (Melle *et al* 2016).

The population is estimated at about 300,000 people of whom two-thirds live in urban and semi-urban areas, while the rest in villages. The settlement pattern forms a closed ring around the foot of the mountain with no permanent settlements on altitudes above 1500m. The indigenous people in the area are Bakweri, Bomboko, Balondo and Bakolle (Ekane, 2000). In all the villages, the population is expanding from both natural increase and immigration. These people are predominantly farmers, hunters, fishermen and traders. The region is also very diverse in fauna with over 370 species recorded. The sub-montane and montane habitats are part of the Cameroon Mountain Endemic Bird Area (EBA). So far, 210 species of birds have been record out of which 8 are threatened and 2 strictly endemic (Mt. Cameroon Francolin (*Francolinus camerunensis*) and the Mt. Cameroon Speirops (*Speirops melanocephalus*) Ekane (2000).

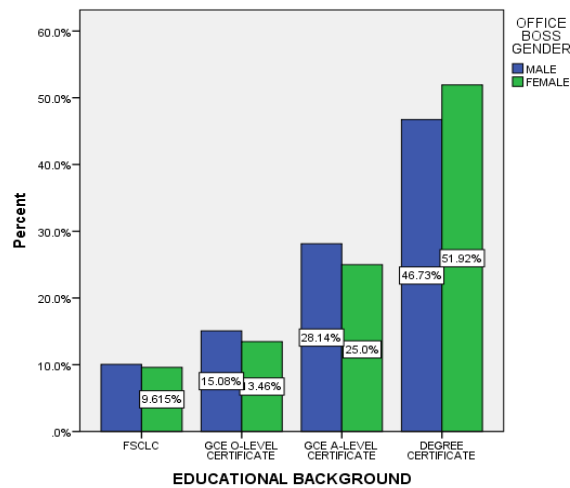


Fig.2: Educational background and the office boss gender

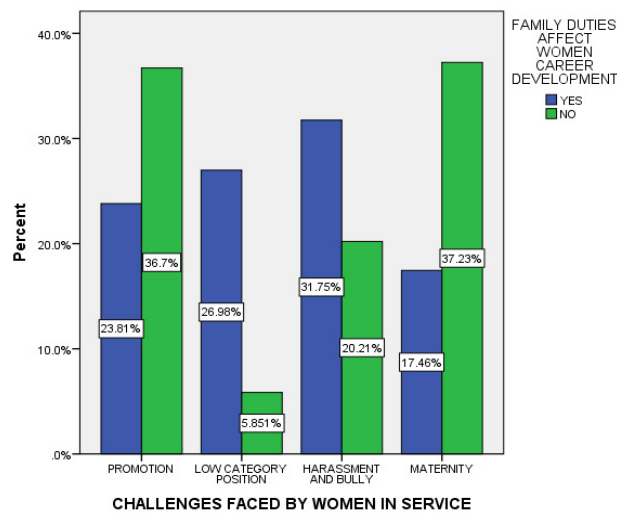


Fig.3: Challenges faced by women and the effect of family duties on their career

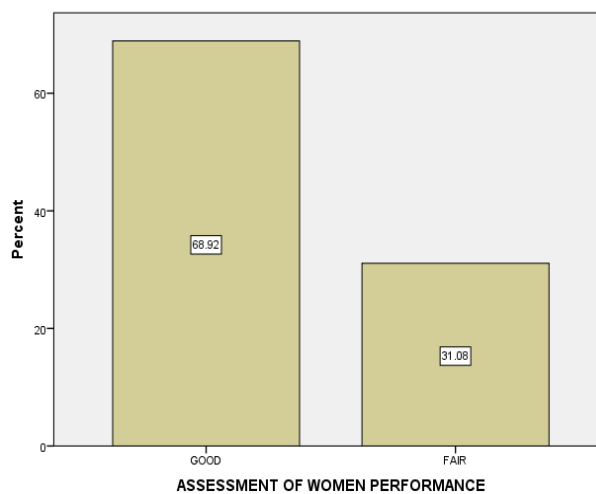


Fig.4: The assessment of women performance in tourism office-service

The assessment of women work-performance recorded a respondent score of 68.92% and 31.08% on Good and Fair respectively (fig.4). Women are known to be service conscious and responsible in service management whenever opportune to be granted a chance, for this reason most office departments headed by women are almost corruption free as compared to the men. Corruption and its scandals in the Cameroon civil service has

rooted the country into internal and foreign debts, has been orchestrated and masterminded by men, using the stolen money to build expensive business empires and residential houses both home and abroad as well as huge bank accounts. Today, some Cameroonians strongly believe the female leadership in Cameroon government political ladder is becoming a necessity to stabilize the country financially. The provision of good services by women in the wildlife tourism industry in Buea is applauded; for this reasons more women should be trained and employed into this sector to boost the work-force.

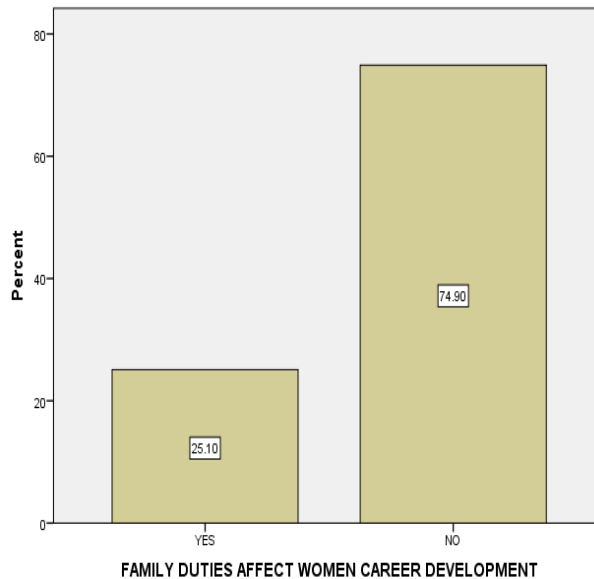


Fig.5: The effect of family responsibilities on female career development

A respondent score of 74.90% and 25.10% is recorded on ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ respectively on the effects of family duties to women career development(fig.5). Most people believe family responsibilities at home do not affect official-service responsibilities in the wildlife tourism industry in Buea. Most women working with the tourism sector in Buea are unmarried; hence they might not be very much involved with huge matrimonial challenges characterized with married homes. Also, most single women workers always rent smaller apartment houses which are easier to relatively manage and would need less time for clean-up during the morning periods before they leave for their official services. A respondent score of 25.10% recorded in this study acknowledged that family duties affect the female responsibilities in official services in Buea. Though many married female workers have house-helps in helping to handle some household services like cooking and house-cleaning, they still do supervision before and after their office-service working hours.

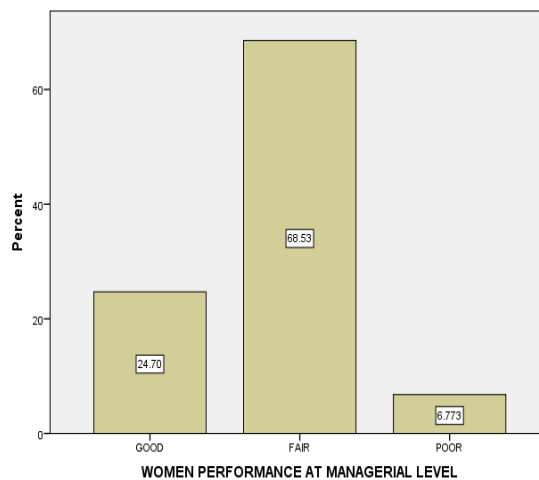


Fig.6: The work performance of women at managerial position

The results have recorded a respondent score of 68.53%, 24.70% and 6.77% on ‘Good’, ‘Fair’, and ‘Poor’ respectively on women work-performance at managerial positions (fig.6). Generally, in Cameroon the managerial positions are dominated by men from independence through the traditional legacy of marginalization making most people to believe only men can handle and perform well in these positions. The leadership of men

at top service positions in the tourism sector for many years has so far equipped men with managerial skills than the women, thus a few women bosses in these offices might have a psychological deficiency when leading men that have dominated the office-work force. A respondent score of 6.77% was recorded on the poor office-work performance. This shows that some women do not believe when promoted to the top office-jobs would have the professional ability to manage the official responsibilities. The phobia might be based on the long historic period of male dominance in every aspect of the society advantaged by the traditional lineage of gender imbalance and discrimination in Cameroon. The matrimonial social fabric of Cameroon still confines almost all financial responsibilities to the men making women to still believe without the financial support of their husbands in handling financial burdens; supposed by the tradition, the marriage might easily become rocky. The respondent score of 33.47%, 32.27%, 23.11% and 11.16% was recorded on promotion, maternity, harassment, and low category professional positions on women office-workers respectively as challenges (fig.7). This study has revealed most women working in the wildlife tourism sector in Buea are facing promotion problems in their profession. This may be due to their poor professional training or lack of training. The fact that Cameroon lacks professional schools in wildlife tourism would mean staff in this sector would face enormous professional challenges in their career as compared to their counterparts abroad. There is a need for the government of Cameroon to create professional wildlife and tourism schools for the workers refreshment training. Nevertheless, poor professional training leads to low capacity out-put consequently the lower positions most women occupy in their work places may account for their lack of professional training. Work-expertise depends very much on frequent training in schools and work-shops. Most professions in Cameroon are poorly equipped with training schools causing their workers to train in foreign schools and work-shops. The foreign training of wildlife tourism office-workers might be expensive comparatively but necessary in developing the industry. The number of trained women staff working in wildlife tourism industry in Cameroon is low as compared to the males who have dominated the work-force of the Ministry of Tourism and affiliates for many years. The recent change of direction by the government on gender consideration in employment schemes in most Ministries has still classified women on low office positions with only a few head of services.

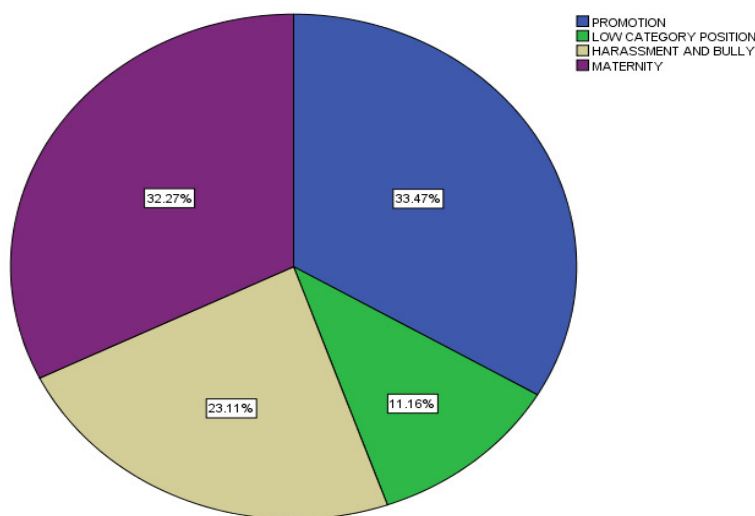


Fig. 7: Challenges faced by women at service

The study has recorded a respondent score of 33.86%, 32.67%, 19.12%, and 14.34% on communication, hotel management, transportation, and department of tourism respectively on the women work-strength (fig.8). Tourists' communication by internet and telephone services is important in the development of wildlife tourism industry in Cameroon. The Cameroon tourism industry is predominated by the wildlife scenery, remotely far from cities, making communication difficult. Tourists face a lot of challenges communicating in the wild due to poor electronic communication net-work problems. The communication service sector is dominated by women and the role it plays in this industry cannot be overlooked. Women are seen hawking telephone credit-cards in the city of Buea encouraging customers for a discount purchase benefit especially the workers of MTN and Orange telephone companies. The work-force of women has also been noticed to be relatively high in the hospitality sector (32.67%) in this study. Most of the women working in hotels in Buea are known to occupy the less professional positions like clean-ups and food-services. The reason may be due to gender discrimination rooted into lack of professional training for these female workers in this sector. A respondent score of 19.12% recorded on the female work-force in the transportation department; a profession historically dominated by males, with the advent of transportation agencies a few women have gained low position jobs. Generally, most women in Cameroon and other parts of the world consider commercial driving physically challenging and would

never adventure. Moreover, a respondent score of 14.34% was recorded on women work-force in the tourism department. The Ministry of Tourism and Leisure has a history of gender imbalance especially at the level of leadership positions. The government has been unable to trigger a solution towards gender equality in its employment scheme. Much effort has been made by the state government on gender equality in educational and health Ministries already, but majority of Cameroon Ministries are still deeply buried into the historic colonial gender discrimination problems.

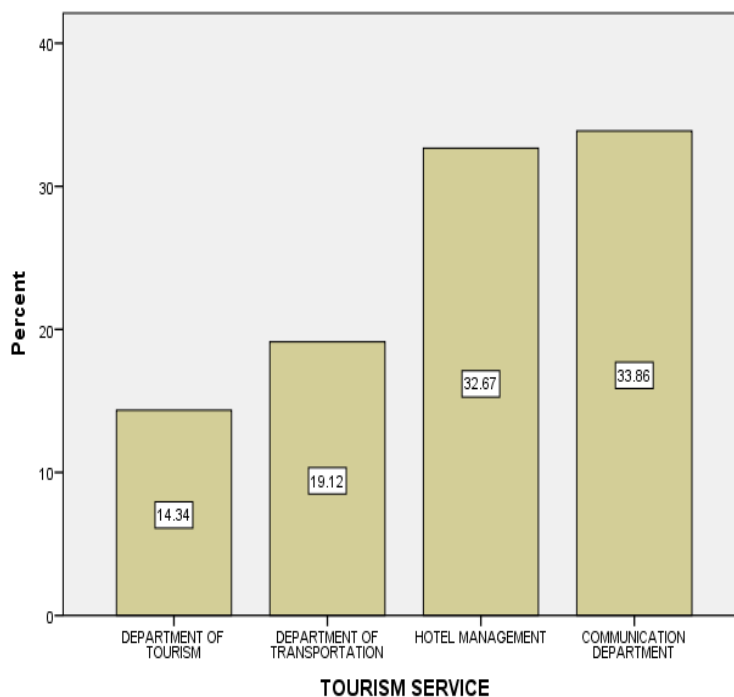


Fig.8: The female work-force in wildlife tourism and affiliated services in Buea

DISCUSSION

The involvement of women in the workplace across the world in general and in Africa in particular has been on the increase. Women are no longer employed to perform unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. Due to their access to education women are finding employment in all the functional areas of organizations and even as line managers. Whilst female representation at lower and middle management is on the increase, the trend is not the same at the senior management level. The under representation of women at senior management has been attributed to what several authors have termed the “glass ceiling”. The concept of the “glass ceiling” emanated from corporate US where a commission termed the Glass Ceiling Commission was set up to investigate why the involvement of women in employment in the USA was not in proportion to their representation at senior management. The glass ceiling has been described as an invisible barrier akin to a concrete ceiling that is impenetrable and prevents the accession of women to senior levels of management. The way the glass ceiling manifests itself differs between countries and organizations. How the glass ceiling is managed will determine the success of an equitable workplace. This study will focus on the incidence and management of the glass ceiling in Durban organizations (Tohmé 2001; Badarin & Alqawasma, 2012; Kiaye & Singh, 2013).

Modern society in the United States is often characterized as highly democratic, humanistic, and advanced. At the same time, arguments concerning the real equality of all people regardless of their race, gender, or social position, still persist. Arguments concerning the position of females in modern society are among the most contradictory. There are people who sincerely believe that women have managed to get an equal position in society compared to men and that women have real equal opportunities as men do. However, there are other people with a totally different view on the position of women in modern society. According to them, the glass ceiling still remains an unsurpassable barrier women regularly face in their life (Clevenger & Singh, 2013).

A holistic approach to women economic empowerment goes beyond mere economic efficiency and growth of enterprises. Increasing women’s control over resources is complemented with resisting dominant gendered ideology that reinforces social, economic and political manifestations of gender inequality. Following this approach, a gender analysis of women’s position within economic practices is necessary to unveil the discrimination at both structural and institutional scales. Institutions of the household, community, market and state harbor legal and substantive discrimination in rights, entitlements that hinder women’s equal access to and

control over assets, resources and services (Hamdan *et al.*, 2007). Women's empowerment in Lebanon can be measured at various social, economic, and political levels. National indicators on women's education and health rank among the highest in the region with high literacy rates especially among the young population, high life expectancy, low under five mortality and low maternal mortality. Civil and political indicators reveal high women participation in the NGO sector, but lower access to decision making and public positions. Women's economic participation tends to be low, characterized by gendered career choices, technical skills and early exit at marriage (Hamdan *et al.*, 2007).

CONCLUSION

Wildlife tourism is itself human-resource intensive due to the service nature of the industry. Further, one job in the core tourism industry creates additional (indirect) jobs in the tourism-related economy. For example: hypothetically in hotel segment, if there is an average of one employee for each hotel room, there are workers indirectly dependent on each person working in hotels, such as travel agency staff, guides, taxi and bus drivers, food and beverage suppliers, laundry workers, textile workers, gardeners, shop staff for souvenirs, airport employees and others. In general, tourism is linked to several other sectors, and can offer good working opportunities to women. A consideration on the increase of women number in the wildlife tourism industry in Cameroon is a necessity for rapid economic growth and employment generation for the youth.

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