GENDER AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

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Abstract

Environmental education can positively influence attitudes and decision making in environmental protection and sustainable tourism development. Understanding gender differences in environmentalism and in citizen participant's motivations, preferred participation process characteristics and process evaluation criteria is an important component of this. Women and men are involved differently in the construction and consumption of tourism. Women, for example, report stronger environmental attitudes and behaviours than men. This study examines the special role that women play in the development of sustainable tourism. Within this framework, the relationship between gender and tourism, the role of Environmental education in encouraging citizen participation, and women-environmentalism relationship is examined. Gender issues are a primary factor of tourism social science. One of the ways that Environmental Education can promote sustainable tourism is to understand the gender differences that exist in citizen participant's motivations, preferred participation process characteristics and process evaluation criteria.

Keywords: *gender, women, environmental education, sustainable tourism, citizen participation*

Introduction

Tourism represents an important means of development for many countries. But it can also have negative impacts, such as disrupting social structures, harming the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, and threatening natural and cultural heritage. Environmental education can encourage environmental behavior and participation in the decision-making process in sustaining the development of tourism. In 2007, the 4th International Conference on Environmental education was held in Ahmedabad, India. The participants recommended changes in several areas of thinking and practice, among them changing participation patterns and practices, using education to help empower and encourage people to actively participate in civil society and the development of capacity for democratic participation in earth governance. The conference also called for greater participation in sustainability practices through

integrated communication between educators, the media, communities, men and women, youth groups and other stakeholders[1].

Citizen participation in environmental decision-making is of vital importance in securing a good quality of life. Local communities know best what alternate solutions should be implemented for appropriate management of their area (Skanavis *et al.*, 2005). This study looks at the way to encourage more women to actively participate in environmental decision-making at all levels. Among them is the facilitation and promotion of the education of women and increasing women's access to information. The rise of women's role in the tourism industry as well as the greater recognition of men and women interdependence, conflicts, and value differences in tourism development, environmentalism, citizen participant's motivations, preferred participation process characteristics and process evaluation criteria is essential, in order to encourage women's participation in the environmental decision-making process towards sustainable development of tourism industry. This study will examine the special role that women possess in the development of sustainable tourism. In this framework the following will be examined:

1. The relationship between gender and tourism, in order to identify men and women value difference on tourism development.

2. The role of environmental education towards citizen participation, in order to emphasize its importance for women's successful participation in the environmental decision making process.

3. Women-environmentalism relationship, in order to detect which characteristics make women participate in environmental protection and restoration.

Gender and environmental issues in tourism development

According to Skanavis *et al.* (2004), there exist two types of relationships between tourism and the environment, a symbiotic one and a competitive one. In the symbiotic relation the environment and the tourism coexist harmoniously and to an extent they complement each other. Human activities do not degrade the natural environment; on the contrary they strengthen it resulting in mutual benefit.

In the competitive relation of tourism and environment, the conflict of these two is presented as economic and anthropogenic activity trying to dominate over the environment and to lead to its degradation through the uncontrolled growth of tourist activities. Some of the most widespread cases of these are: sea pollution from the maritime transport, disposal of unrefined or defectively processed sewage, the quality of land from the uncontrolled disposal of waste, the geomorphology due to extensive building and creation of infrastructure networks, the flora, fauna and generally in the natural ecosystems from the various land uses, the loss of natural ecosystems, the exhaustive fishery, the removal of fauna, due to noise pollution or deforestation, the

exhaustion of available quantity of aquatic potential due to the abrupt and increased consumption combined with the reduction of permeability of grounds (UNEP, 1995).

UNEP (1995) in a report on tourism and the environment underlines the need for programs of guidance and education regarding ecotourism, the type of tourism that is most representative in a "friendlier" relation with the environment (built and natural) and all the alternative forms of tourism (agro-tourism, tourism of adventure, tourism in the nature etc.) (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996). It stresses the necessity for information and education of both the visitors and the residents working in the ecotourism sites and local enterprises, and in general for everyone who is related with this sensitive issue. It also stresses the need for organized action in order to avoid negative effects in the local culture and environment (UNEP, 1995). Environmental education is particularly important as it can educate and increase environmental awareness of local populations, as they are the ones mainly occupied with ecotourism (Ross and Wall, 1999) but also the visitors in the eco tourism areas. In addition, there is a need for individuals that provide environmental education in the protected areas and in the regions of particular natural beauty that also constitute tourist destinations. Their role is closely related to the environmental and natural education (Skanavis *et al.*, 2004). In the protected areas of Europe, education is considered as the most important subject following conservation. Their aim is to stimulate the conscience of visitors for nature and to increase their comprehension for values of the natural environment (Bibelriether, 1999). Planners and administrators of national parks and other protected areas face increasing challenges in managing the popularity of these natural areas as tourism destinations while ensuring their ecological integrity. Public and private involvement in tourism and environmental decision making facilitates environmental and tourism planning which is often a contested political activity involving multiple, interdependent stakeholders with diverse and possibly divergent interests and values with respect to the natural environment (Jamal *et al.*, 2002).

Tourism, as leisured travel (Kinnaird *et al.*, 1994) and the industry that supports it, is built of human relations, and thus impacts and is impacted by global and local gender relations (Swain, 1995). In tourism social science research, distinctions among kinds of people and their behaviors in demand and supply roles as guests and working producers (hosts) have become basic units of analysis (Smith 1976). Relationships within and between groups of hosts and guests can be analyzed by focusing on a number of characteristics including gender, class, age, ethnicity and race, and nationality (Swain, 1995). These distinctions intersect and affect each other, and form the complex populations studied by tourism researchers (Ireland 1993). For social scientists engaged in tourism research, gender is thus a fundamental category useful in human resource studies, economic development projects, marketing strategies, site and infrastructure planning, and policy development (Swain, 1995). In one of the first published collections on the topic of gender in tourism, Vivian Kinnaird and Derek

Hall (1994) take on the task of defining the subject from a tourism development perspective. According to the Kinnaird *et al.* (1994), women and men have different involvement in the construction and consumption of tourism.

Environmental issues in tourism development are a distinct area of research ripe for gender analysis (Swain, 1995). Links between gender, changing environmental perceptions and practices by the providers of tourism services in rural Spain are addressed in a pioneering paper by Garcia-Ramon, Canoves and Valdovinos. Farm tourism development in the rural postproduction economy of Spain is analyzed by Garcia-Ramon et al (1995), for its impact on gender roles and environmental perceptions. Despite regional distinctions in the natural and cultural landscape, and economic conditions in the two study areas of Catalonia and Galicia, this type of domestic tourism development is shown to have similar effects specifically on women providers. The commoditization of domestic work to provide services for tourists has constituted a valuable alternative for women (Shaw and Williams, 1994). Some income and support for continuation of the family farm is possible without major changes to the gender division of labour. Tourism work, seems to contribute to ideological shifts as women become more integrated with the "outside world" and more concerned about conservation of their landscapes, which have become important to their livelihood (Swain, 1995).

Rural tourism is a field of activation for women in Greece. The development of women's agrotourism cooperatives in Greece could be described as an ongoing story of success and struggle. The running of private or cooperative nature accommodation in rural areas and the establishment and development of the women's cooperatives for the better utilization of local products, traditions and cultural heritage comprise the main axes of women's involvement (Kazakopoulos and Gidarakou, 2003). Agrotourism is conceived as means of bringing opportunity to areas of natural beauty, traditional culture, and historical interest, by using these resources to stimulate the revitalization of rural economies in decline, while at the same time preserving cultural heritage and the natural environment (Turner 1993). The concept of agrotourism, as used in Greece, embraces tourism activities carried out in non-urban regions by individuals mainly employed in the primary or secondary sector of the economy. Such activities typically involve small tourism units of family or cooperative type, which offer accommodations, goods, and/or other services and provide a supplementary income for rural families and/or an independent income for women living in rural areas (Iakovidou 1992). Through cooperatives, women have been able to contribute to the income of their families and to bring themselves a measure of economic independence. This has contributed to the recognition of the significant role played by women in the economic and social fabric of rural life. It has also been catalytic in raising their confidence and improving their social position in the local community. The contact of women with people from a diversity of cultures has offered them the chance to move

beyond the limitations of their own "small" community, while preserving cultural and natural heritage (Iakovidou and Turner, 1995). The rise of women's role in tourism industry as well as the greater recognition of men and women interdependence, conflicts, and value differences in tourism development is essential, but not enough in order to promote participation in environmental decision making process.

Agenda 21 (1992) has most explicitly articulated the need for women to be involved in setting the environmental sustainability agenda,: (a) women have particular environmental concerns and perspectives based on their social and biological roles, and (b) as a group, women have traditionally been disadvantaged and excluded from decision-making (Buckingham-Hatfield, 1999). The World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002), formally recognized women as one of nine major civil groups whose participation is required for effective implementation of the sustainable development agenda (Parris, 2005). Women's education and access to information are critical in order to acquire knowledge, develop the necessary skills and opportunities for participation in environmental decisions (UN, 1993, 1996, 2002).

The theory of sustainable tourism emphasizes the critical importance of environmental stewardship (Brander *et al.*, 1995). Environmental education should play a more active role to encourage visitors and local population to alter their inappropriate behavior and to assist the management of environmentally sound tourism development. According to Hungerford *et al*, (1980) the "superordinate goal" of Environmental Education is to aid participants in becoming environmentally knowledgeable and, above all, skilled and dedicated citizens who are willing to work, individually and collectively, towards achieving and/or maintaining a dynamic equilibrium between quality of life and quality of the environment. The strategic objective concerning the critical area of tourism, gender and the environment is involving women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels. Among the actions that should be taken are the facilitation and promotion of the education of girls and women and increasing women's access to information, thus enhancing their knowledge, skills and opportunities for participation in environmental decisions (UN, 1996).

Environmental education and citizen participation

Environmental education (EE) was developed in the 1960s-'70s, during the rise of the environmental movement, and was considered as one of the most effective means to solve environmental problems. EE questioned the dominant anthropocentric system of values, focused on education of all citizens and it was aiming in fundamental changes in environmental attitudes, behaviors and values of citizens of all age groups. The 1977 the Tbilisi Intergovernmental Conference on EE objectives (awareness, sensitivity, attitude, skills, and participation) serves as major guidance for working on building an environmentally effective human behavior. The basic principles of EE

mandate that EE (Skanavis and Sakellari, 2005): (a) should be a life long process and accessible to people of all age groups and cultural backgrounds. It should be extended well beyond school systems covered by means of non-formal and informal educational procedures, (b) has to be interdisciplinary, employing concepts from natural, social, political sciences and economics, (c) should be as holistic as possible, emphasizing the interdependence of humans and nature, (d) should empower students with the necessary tools to critically analyse environmental issues and exercise the right to choose the best-case scenario, (e) should invest in the technological based instruction, which allows through simulations from computer based programs, the analysis of environmental conditions, prediction of side effects and understanding of the importance of our active participation in the environmental decision making process.

EE programs focus on developing programs, which will enable citizens to behave in environmentally desirable ways. All these educational attempts focus into promoting responsible citizenship behavior-arming citizens with the appropriate skills for critical thinking and with the ability to actively participate in the environmental decision-making processes. EE has mainly been established in the formal education; however, its importance has been recognized in the forms of non-formal and informal education.

Environmental concern and the resulting environmentally responsible behavior are affected by a complex interaction of attitudes, beliefs and socio-demographic variables. In an effort to detect, which characteristics make citizens participate in the protection and restoration of the environment, several researchers have attempted to develop models and techniques for assessing responsible environmental behavior (Hines *et al.*, 1986; Hungerford and Volk, 1990) and have shown how a behavioral manipulation of many variables can result in people's participation in desirable environmental behaviors. Michaella Zint (2002) assessed three[2] social psychology's attitude-behavior theories' ability to predict science education teachers' intention to act on environmental issues (Zint, 2002). Theory of Planned Behaviour, formulated by Icec Ajzen in 1991, focusing on past environmental behavior, provided the best attitude-behaviour model for predicting science teachers' intention to act. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the human behaviour originates from the intention of the individual to behave in a certain way. As long as his intention to be associated with certain behaviour is strong, so much more likely is to act this way (Ajzen, 1991). Modifying individuals' intention to act brings behaviour change (Zint, 2002). According to Sia (1984), Sivek (1989) and Marcinkowski (1989) there are five predictors of Responsible Environmental Behaviour: individual and group locus of control, knowledge of and skills in using action strategies and environmental sensitivity. Their findings were supported by Lierman (1996), Hsu (1997) and were included in "Guidelines for Excellence" of National American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE), (Marcinkowski, 1998).

EE suggests that people can live in harmony with nature and act in a fair way with each other and that they can make decisions based on interest and care for the future generations. EE aims in a democratic society, where active, environmentally literate citizens participate in a responsible way (NAAEE, 1996). EE prompts citizens to realize the connection between the various policies, their way of life and that of future generations, and the importance of active participation in the political process acting as catalysts for political change. As active participants, they can recognize, support, educate and raise local issues at national policy planning (Scriabine, 1996).

Going back to the international conferences on EE, environmental participation is presented intensely. In 1975, the declaration of the conference on EE, organized in Belgrade, proclaimed that one of the EE objectives is participation in the resolution of environmental problems (UNESCO-UNEP, 1976). In 1977, the Tbilisi Declaration noted that citizen participation continues to be the main objective of EE providing social groups and citizens with the opportunity to participate actively at all levels towards the resolution of environmental problems (UNESCO, 1978). In 1987, in Moscow participants agreed that EE should develop skills, promote values, and provide criteria and directives for decision-making (UNESCO-UNEP, 1987). In 1992, at Rio Conference it was formulated that environmental issues are better resolved with the participation of all interested citizens and the critical role of formal and non formal education was highlighted for the effective public participation in the environmental decision-making (UNCED, 1992). In the World Summit of United Nations for the Sustainable Development, that was organized in Johannesburg in 2002 attendants concurred that sustainable development requires a long-term prospect and wide participation in policy planning and in the decision-making process (UN, 2002). Therefore, citizen participation constitutes a fundamental goal of EE.

Citizen participation is usually defined as the involvement of people, outside the official governmental mechanism, in the decision-making process (Fiorino, 1996; Fulop, 1999; Siouti, 1998; Brohman, 1996; Osler, 1997) with any possible intervention in the processes of decision-making by the Administration, from juridical affairs up to letters of protest, mobilisations of organised groups or the direct action of citizens (Fiorino, 1996). The complexity of environmental problems has elected the process and the methods of citizen participation as important tools for the solution of environmental problems (Beierle, 1999; Monroe *et al*., 2000). However, although science and available technologies for the solution of environmental problems have presented important progress, citizen participation in the decisions that concern environmental issues is limited (Fiorino, 1996).

According to Beierle (1998, 1999) the outcome of citizen participation is manifested in the final decisions that have been taken and evaluated based on how citizen's participation has achieved the social goals, which surpass the immediate interests of the groups that are involved in the decision-making process (Beierle, 1998,

1999; Beierle and Cayford, 1999, 2001, 2002; Davies, 1998). Social goals (Beierle, 1998, 1999) such as education and informing the public, incorporation of values of citizens in the process of decision-making, improvement of essential quality of decisions, strengthening confidence in the institutions, alleviation of conflicts and cost-effectiveness, can lead to the improvement of public programs of participation, support the evaluation of innovative methods, and promote the theoretical comprehension of citizen participation.

Gough (1995) argues that women have been overlooked in most environmental education programs and that this absence of women is related to the male-dominated subject of the epistemological framework of environmental education. The content of the corresponding curriculum and research programs tends to be determined by a male-agenda. Also, gender is a primary factor in human interactions, and is thus an important aspect of future tourism social science (Swain, 1995). So, one of the ways that EE can promote sustainable tourism is to understand the gender differences that exist in environmentalism (Dietz, Kalof and Stern, 2002) and in citizen participant's motivations, preferred participation process characteristics and process evaluation criteria (Anthony *et al.*, 2004).

Women and environmentalism

The inspiration for Rachel's Network came when Rachel Carson sparked a movement with the publication of her book Silent Spring (1962) and her subsequent activism. Around the globe women have led local environmental movements (Merchant 1992; Peterson and Merchant, 1986). In North America, they have mobilized communities against toxic and hazardous waste and technological catastrophes such as Love Canal and Three Mile Island (Davidson and Freudenburg 1996; Levine 1982). In Canada, women have also been well represented in the leadership of environmental organizations (such as the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, and Friends of Clayoquout Sound) and movements dedicated to conserve wilderness areas and change forestry practices. Dating back centuries, women environmental activists have been essential to ecological awareness and environmental protection (Zelezny and Bailey, 2006). The Chipko movement in India and the Green Belt movement in Kenya, led by Wangari Maathai, the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, are two examples of environmental models led by women that have effectively changed the face of environmentalism.

Past studies have consistently demonstrated a higher level of environmental concern among women (Blocker and Eckberg, 1989; Brody, 1984; McStay and Dunlap, 1983; Mohai, 1992; Ozanne *et al.*, 1999; Stern *et al.*, 1993; Stout-Weigand and Trent, 1983), particularly in terms of specific issues where safety is a concern and where issues are local, rather than global, in nature (Davidson and Freudenburg, 1996). Numerous studies have examined the relationship between demographic variables and

environmentally responsible behavior. Two recognized reviews of gender difference in environmental attitudes and behaviors conducted by Hines *et al.*, (1986-87) and Van Liere and Dunlap, (1980) concluded that research on the relationship between these variables is meagre and inconsistent. Zelezny *et al.*, (2000) presented a review of literature on gender difference and environmentalism. This review of recent research, from 1988 to 1998, on gender differences in environmental attitudes and behaviors found that, contrary to past inconsistencies, a clearer picture has emerged: women report stronger environmental attitudes and behaviors than men. Explanations for gender differences in environmentalism were examined by Zelezny *et al.*, (2000). It was found that compared to males, females had higher levels of socialization and socially responsible. In general, females were consistently more likely than males to have more empathy and a significantly stronger ethic of care and responsibility for the environment problem (Zelezny and Bailey, 2006). Gilligan (1982) found that women frame problems and design solutions in a different way. Zelezny and Bailey (2006) contend that women, given their strong ethic of care and ecocentric values, may enlighten environmental problem solving that has been traditionally masculine in nature. In addition, because females are socialised to be more caring toward others and the environment, and more interdependent and collectivistic, they are more likely to be adept at teamwork (Zelezny and Bailey, 2006).

Gender differences in "political engagement" — knowledge, interest, and perceived efficacy in politics — in conjunction with gender differences in access to resources may explain gender differences in political citizen participation (Schlozman *et al.*, 1995, Verba *et al.*, 1997). Women participation may be motivated differently than that of men. Women may be more aware of their own impacts on the environment and consequently feel motivated by responsibility to help address issues resulting from this impact (Zelezny *et al.*, 2000). Women's concern for the environment may be a reflection of their intent to "protect" the public (Shapiro and Mahajan, 1986). The suggested motivations of "care" and "protection" are ideas echoed in many studies of gender and natural resource issues (Blocker and Eckberg, 1989, Brody, 1984, Kellert and Berry, 1987, Stern *et al.*, 1993). Anthony *et al.*, (2004) compared the motivations and preferences of men and women toward citizen participation in wildlife-related decisions and explored gender differences in motivations for participation, preferred process characteristics, and criteria used to evaluate process success. According to their findings, men's participation was more often motivated by a request from a wildlife-related entity, while women placed more importance on processes having unbiased facilitation and the opportunity for open exchange of ideas and information with the agency (Anthony *et al.*, 2004).

Although significant progress has been achieved at UN conferences throughout the 1990s, the 2005 report by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), stressed the lack of women's effective participation in decision-making on

environmental issues. The core of the critique was that governments worldwide did not achieve the economic, social and political transformation underlying the promises and vision of UN conferences. Women remain absent from most environmental decision-making bodies (WEDO, 2005). Few women are represented at the managerial and decision-making level of environmental movements and organizations, like UN agencies, where women still remain in positions of lower status, with 60% confined to administrative fields (Deda and Rubian, 2004). In European Union, gender equality and the environment are still dealt with as separate issues, while in the Unites States male-dominated governmental bodies decide the fate of the environment and natural resources (WEDO, 2005).

Conclusion

Society, environment and economy are the three key areas of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2005). The concept of sustainable development promotes social justice and gender equity. This study suggests inequalities exist in tourism development and one of the avenues to understanding the dynamics of sustainable tourism and promoting change toward equality is through the study of gender relations. Furthermore, because of the rich diversity in tourism experience and the gender differences in behaviours, perspectives, knowledge, and tastes, a new, gender conscious framework is essential in sustainable tourism planning from educational strategies to decision-making processes.

Gender equity and women's needs must be integrated in the environmental and tourism planning decision making processes. Although significant progress has been achieved at UN conferences throughout the 1990s, women still remain absent from most environmental decision-making bodies (WEDO, 2005). EE can constitute a dynamic means of stimulating women's environmental behavior and encourages their participation in environmental decision-making process. Problems of environmental decision-making in tourism development are intrinsically complex and often involve multiple attributes, the relative importance of which needs to be determined. In order to approach issue resolution in an informed and responsible manner, the learner must be able to identify the ecological consequences related to the issues and their proposed solutions (Volk, 1993).

This study contributes to an understanding of women's role in sustainable tourism issues. Links between gender, changing environmental perceptions and practices by the providers of tourism services are addressed. Gender is a primary factor of tourism social science. Therefore, one of the ways that EE can promote sustainable tourism is to understand the gender differences that exist in citizen participant's motivations, preferred participation process characteristics and process evaluation criteria. Among the actions that should be taken are the facilitation and promotion of the education of women, thus enhancing their knowledge, skills and opportunities for participation in

environmental decisions. Future research is important to look more closely at gender differences as they interact with other demographic factors as age and education level in order to develop successful EE programs for women and promote their participation in decision making process for sustainable tourism planning.

Endnotes
[1]   4th International Conference on Environmental Education, Overall Recommendations, http://www.tbilisiplus30.org/Final%20Recommendations.pdf (Accessed on 15.01.2008)
[2] Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, Ajzen and Fishbein 1980, Fishbein 1980), Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991) and Theory of Trying (Bagozzi and Warshaw, 1990)

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