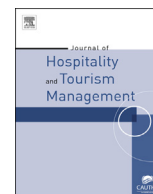




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## Women in Turkish tourism<sup>☆</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

The tourism sector in Turkey has grown considerably since the early 1970s. This change has many effects, including the working conditions of women. It is a fact that tourism is an industry that affects women's employment in profoundly and positively and provides many opportunities for women. The aim of this study is to reveal what kind of achievements women gained in the history of Turkish tourism by their entrance into the sector and its development. The method of oral history, which can convey unrecorded data, is used. In this study, 18 people were interviewed. Interviewees were selected among tourism employees like housekeepers, managers and tour guides; as well as those who do not participate in the tourism workforce, but are residents of touristic destinations. The questions are prepared in accordance with subjects such as the working conditions of women, the economic structure of Turkey, the social status of women in daily life and their status at work and in tourism sector from past to present. The findings of the research are examined in the chapter on women's introduction to tourism, their entrepreneurship and their work in non-family businesses. As a result of the research, it has been concluded that tourism has transformed the traditions in the Turkish society and the women, who began to work in their homes firstly, gained strength in both economic, social and individual terms by entering the business and utilizing the opportunities that tourism has provided.

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## 1. Introduction

Tourism as a rapidly growing and developing sector around the world and it brings about significant transformations for many countries. Turkey is one of those countries, emerging in the tourism market in a short period of time with its geographical location, convenient tourism resources and multidimensional support of the government (Aykaç, 2009, p. 13). The economic, social, cultural and environmental impact of tourism on Turkey has been noticed since 1940s, showing a tendency to develop between 1963 and 1980, and an average growth rate of 12.1% between 1984 and 1990. Tourism, which provides economic restructuring for countries, is considered a social event, a specific form of people living together in a society (Avçıkurt, 2007, p. 57), because there is an interaction between

different communities with different educational, social and cultural structure as a result of the relations established during travels and accommodations. This situation causes changes in people's knowledge, manners, traditions and cultural structures over the course of time (Civelek, 2010, p. 332). It is known that indigenous people have abandoned their old, self-enclosed, conservative attitudes and developed outward-oriented behavioral models as a result of the social relations established with the tourists. Women working in the service sector, which does not require expertise, are one of the groups mediating this change, being intensely exposed to this kind of interaction (Oktik, 2001).

There are many studies which suggest that tourism revealed new professions, caused changes in traditions and customs, became a major factor in the removal of prejudices, and played an important role in the change of value judgments in Turkish society. It is a recognized fact that the tourism industry has a strong and positive impact on women's employment as it offers many opportunities for them (Sinclair, 1998). According to Global Report on Women in Tourism (2010), women make up a large part of the official tourism workforce and when compared to other sectors, the employment rate of women has always been two times more than men. While

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this superiority is well represented in service and office level jobs, it is poorly represented in occupational levels. Moreover, women in the tourism industry generally earn between 10% and 15% less than their male counterparts. Some studies on Spain (Munoz-Bullon, 2009), Indonesia (Cukier, Norris and Wall, 1996) and Beliz (Gentry, 2007) show that men who work in the same position get higher salaries than women. Yet, according to this report, one of five tourism ministers in the world is a woman. However, this does not change the fact that there are also a lot of non-salaried jobs done by women in family tourism enterprises.

There are many studies which argue that women will be empowered through tourism and play a more active role in the social sphere (Chant, 1997; Sinclair, 1997; Ferguson, 2010, 2011). When studies on tourism and women's relations are examined, it is seen that the vast majority of the studies are conducted in the context of women's empowerment and gender equality issues (Ferguson, 2011; Harvey et al., 1995; Levy, Lerch, Gender, & Mar, 1991; Praveen & Asokan, 2013; Tucker, 2007; Vandegrift, 2008; Wilkinson & Prativi, 1995). From Turkey's perspective, it is seen that the studies focus on issues such as identifying the socio-demographic characteristics of female entrepreneurs, their reasons for starting up a business, the problems they encounter in establishing and maintaining a business, and their general organizational tendencies. (Boyacıoğlu, 2014; Noyan Yalman & Gündoğdu, 2014; Soysal, 2010; Yirik & Ilgaz Yıldırım, 2014; Çelik & Özdevecioğlu, 2001). On the other hand, there are no studies which focus on how women have become acquainted with the tourism industry, the opportunities that tourism offered to women in time and the achievements through the transformations brought by tourism. With this study, we will attempt to explain what kind of personal achievements women have achieved with the development of tourism and how women entered the industry first.

## 2. Literature review

Major transformations in terms of both economics and traditions take place in the regions that are opened to tourism. In these regions, the society undergoes an important transformation in terms of both economy and tradition. From this perspective, female employment and women's influence on tourism and society (or vice-versa) have been discussed in many studies (Ireland, 1993; Sinclair, 1997; Swain, 1995). The recognition of women's right to speak, the employment of women in the tourism industry and inter-marriages are some of these transformations (Özel, 2014). Tourism has reached a global scale in the 1950s, as developing countries started to offer cheaper services to developed countries. Besides, tourism industry offers the largest employment opportunity to the women in the third world countries. Tourism as a service sector is different from other industries because of its labor-intensive production style. In the tourism industry, mechanization and automation are not possible beyond a certain point, so the density of workforce hired by the industry is higher than other industries (Oktik, 2001). A significant part of the work done in the industry (cleaning, bed making, service etc.) is considered to be "feminine" just like some other works in different industries (nursing, secretarial duties, teaching, etc.) (Akoğlan, 1996, p. 16). Therefore, it is preferable to employ women in these jobs. For this reason, the industry can be named as a labor-intensive business field, as well as a women-intensive one.

Women comprise the majority of registered and unregistered workforce in tourism. According to Edgel (1990), one out of every fifteen people in the world is working in the tourism industry, and half of them are women (Oktik, 2001). According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), in 2013, the share of women employed in the tourism industry on a global scale was 54.1% in

developed countries, 57.7% in developing countries and 40.7% in underdeveloped countries.

The intensive participation of women in working life in Turkey took place in the 1950s. The service sector, which started in these periods, provided new business opportunities for women, though not as much as men. When the indicators related to the tourism industry in Turkey are examined, the female employment rate is found to be 21.7%, which is much lower than the rate of female employment in the emerging and underdeveloped countries group (Uğuz Çelik & Topbaş, 2016). The low proportion of women in tourism employment in Turkey can be explained with reasons such as the level of education, social and cultural development of the society, specialization etc. (Yanardağ and Avci, 2012, p. 45).

As an industry that provides job opportunities to a large number of people who do not have a certain qualification, it is a fact that tourism provides a working environment for women isolated from work life with the social recognition it brings. The fact underlying this is that the tasks performed in the tourism industry such as cooking, welcoming guests, making beds, cleaning are attributed to the woman (Akoğlan, 1996, p. 16). There are three basic characteristics of women employed in tourism. Firstly, female employees are involved in positions that are an extension of their family roles (Kozak Akoğlan & Aşan, 2012) and most of them are low-income and low-skill (Scheyvens, 2002:124) jobs. On the other hand, some of the roles that women are socially burdened (maternity, spouse, bride, etc.) oblige them to make good money and to fulfill their household and social responsibilities at the same time. Finally, when viewed from the perspective of women, tourism offers more favorable opportunities, especially when compared to traditional and hard work based on agriculture (Scheyvens, 2002:124). Chant (1997) concludes that the fact that women are involved in tourism activities can make women behave "like themselves". While Sinclair (1997) emphasizes the benefits of working in tourism for women, Ferguson (2010) discusses the feelings of women working in tourism industry from the perspective of personal and economic refreshment. It can be said that similar results are obtained from the studies on women and tourism in Turkey. Boyacıoğlu (2014) concludes that traditional family structure, economic situation of women and the society's view of women went through a positive transformation after the development of women entrepreneurship focusing on rural tourism. Fidan and Nam (2012) also suggest that tourism has increased women's life quality and self esteem while giving them sense of individuality in the study they conducted in Taraklı. As it can be understood from the literature, women and tourism studies are address to the subjects that are brought to tourism by women such as the emergence of women entrepreneurs and its effect on the tourism development. The women's acquaintance with tourism and their entrance to the industry are examined in this study. Contributing to this field and passing on this contribution to future generations can be named as the main aim of this study.

## 3. Methods

Oral history method was used in this research. Oral history is based on interpretation by listening to people, recording their memories and experiences, and is an interdisciplinary method where sociology, history, literary and cultural studies intersect (Thompson, 2006, p. 23). According to Counce (2001, p. 19), oral history contributes to the historical meaning-making process in order to understand the present and to guide the future. People interviewed for data collection in the oral history method are defined by the term "source person". This method consists of making interviews by referring to the memory of the source persons, archiving and publishing the resources and performing

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