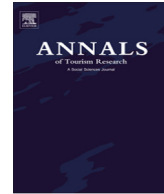




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Women in tourism: Shifting gender ideology in the DR



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which the employment of women in the tourism industry has challenged or reinforced the traditional *machismo-marianismo* gender ideology in the Dominican Republic. Semi-structured individual, coupled, and group interviews were conducted in 12 coastal communities to investigate residents' perceptions about gender ideology as it intersects with the employment of women in tourism. The findings reveal tourism employment as a source of opportunity, with women gaining economic and social independence, but also conflict as women and men negotiate new gender roles and identities. Emphasizing issues such as the double workload, negotiating domestic tasks with partners, and tension resulting from employment, this study illuminates the pressing practical needs of Dominican women.

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Introduction

Tourism's ability to influence cultural and social norms is of great interest to many scholars (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006). One aspect that merits exploration is the gendered-nature of tourism

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production in lesser economically developed countries (LEDs). This is particularly complicated in Latin American countries, such as the Dominican Republic (DR), where *machismo–marianismo* gender ideology firmly place women in the private sphere of the home and men in the public sphere of the community. However, because “the [DR] has been fundamentally restructured by the process of globalization, international debt, and neoliberalism” (Raynolds, 2002, p. 786; also see Bueno, 2013), women often need to seek employment outside the household. How, and to what degree, the shift of women working outside the household challenges traditional social structure and gender norms is a continued discussion in the feminist literature and further examination is needed.

From the late 1970s–1990s, the DR experienced intense tourism development encouraged by both international aid (e.g., World Bank funds developed the North Coast; see Freitag, 1994) and foreign investment. Neoliberal economic policy established tourism as a primary industry sector (Pozo, Sánchez-Fung, & Santos-Paulino, 2010), concentrated along coastlines that have transformed fishing villages into tourist destinations (Leon, 2007) and imposed substantial changes to the livelihoods of residents. Coinciding this, women joined the labor force within the tourism industry and manufacturing sector (also known as the free trade zones [FTZs]), counterbalancing the increasing rate of unemployment for men experienced during the same time.

Thus this study, based on interviews conducted in 12 coastal communities, explores the residents' perceptions towards gender ideology as it intersects with the employment of women in the tourism industry and the way it has challenged or reinforced the ideology of *machismo–marianismo*. Questions were designed to reflect the underlying ideas of gender ideology including primacy of the breadwinner role, belief in gendered separate spheres, wife/motherhood and the feminine self, household utility, and acceptance of male privilege (Davis & Greenstein, 2009). Individuals' beliefs towards traditional gender ideology were assessed alongside perceptions of women working in the industry and thereby a discussion of the influence of women working in tourism emerged.

There has been growth in the literature exploring temporary relationships and interactions in transnational tourist communities that influence gender ideology (Frohlick, 2007, 2013), studies of the migration of men and/or women and how it may impact gender ideology in relationship to labor (Georges, 1992; McIlwaine, 2010), and research examining the effect of tourism on gender norms (Tucker, 2007; Tucker & Boonabaana, 2012). Likewise, there have also been studies acknowledging the way in which gender ideology influences women's participation in tourism projects (Duffy, Mowatt, Chancellor, & Cárdenas, 2012; Tucker, 2007; Tucker & Boonabaana, 2012). However, this study responds to the call to critically examine the way in which *tourism influences gender ideology* and how individuals within these contexts negotiate changes in gender discourse (Duffy et al., 2012; Ferguson, 2010; Tucker, 2007; Tucker & Boonabaana, 2012). Moreover it expands on the paucity of tourism research on gender in Latin America (Duffy et al., 2012). By exploring residents' perceptions towards gender ideology as it intersects with the employment of women in the tourism industry, we address the research question ‘do women working in the tourism industry challenge or reinforce the traditional *machismo–marianismo* gender ideology?’

Machismo–marianismo model of gender relations

The underpinnings of *machismo–marianismo* derive from the Catholic tradition and were exacerbated by the influence of colonialism and military control of the state (Stevens, 1973). *Machismo* continues to be influential within the region and can be understood as a paradigm that shapes male attitudes, behaviors, and identity such as masculinity, strength, and sexual prowess (Flake & Forste, 2006; Welsh, 2001). Likewise, others have posited that the ‘hypermasculinity’, or extreme male pride, is a culturally accepted and expected response to inferiority and powerlessness that stems from colonialism (see *machismo* in Welsh, 2001). A cautionary note to conceptualizing *machismo* is that though it is often considered for its undesirable attributes, it also has positive connotations for men as the ‘protector of the family’ and one who adheres to the ideas of *caballerismo*, or honor, chivalry, and loyalty to family (Fragoso & Kashubeck, 2000).

Stevens (1973) developed *marianismo*, as a counterpart to *machismo*, to explain women's adoption of a submissive and passive role in the household by emulating the Virgin Mary. She fulfills her role as the spiritually strong being, countering the immorality of man and bringing balance to the model. In

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