


Chapter 13

Sustainable Travel Behaviour Among Women Tourists Visiting Rural Destinations

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how women's engagement in and perceptions of the advantages of waste management in rural tourist Himalayan villages in Darjeeling have changed as a result of the expansion of rural tourism. Regression analysis and positive correlation show that rural tourism substantially increases women's participation in community activities. While the growth of the tourism industry has a good impact on women's empowerment and cultural preservation, it is insufficient to propel environmental and sustainable development on its own, calling for integrated strategies. While descriptive statistics show that rural tourism and women's engagement are positively perceived, they also draw attention to the shortcomings of sustainable and environmental activities. The ANOVA results attest to the critical role that women play in advancing sustainable waste management techniques. The study's conclusions are consistent with previous research in that they highlight the value of encouraging rural tourism and women's empowerment for the advancement of sustainable community development.

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INTRODUCTION

Solid waste management in the villages of Darjeeling is a growing concern due to rapid urbanization, population growth, and increasing tourism. Darjeeling generates approximately 30 metric tons of solid waste per day, with a significant portion not being properly segregated or treated, leading to environmental and public health risks. The implementation of the 'Solid Waste Management Rules 2016' has been challenging, with only about 19% of waste being segregated at the source (xbin. in, 2023).

Initiatives like Project Hildaari, supported by Nestlé India and implemented by PLAN Foundation, are making strides in addressing these issues by promoting source segregation and professionalizing waste workers. This project aims to transform Darjeeling into a clean tourist city through collaborative efforts involving local bodies, citizens, and NGOs (thecsr universe.com, 2023). Additionally, government regulations and NGO efforts to raise consumer environmental awareness play a crucial role in reducing municipal solid waste and mitigating air pollution caused by waste transfer stations (Rabbani et al., 2020).

The Himalayan region, known for its stunning landscapes and diverse ecosystems, attracts millions of tourists annually. However, this influx of tourists has led to significant waste management challenges. Rural tourism, which emphasizes sustainable travel practices, has emerged as a potential solution to these challenges. Within this framework, women play a crucial role in managing waste in rural tourist areas, contributing to both environmental sustainability and community well-being.

Rural tourism aims to minimize the environmental impact of tourism and promote conservation efforts. Effective waste management is a key component of ecotourism, particularly in ecologically sensitive areas like the Himalayas. Studies have shown that proper waste management practices are essential to preserving these regions' natural beauty and ecological balance (Lohchab, Agrawal, & Kaushik, 2003).

Women are integral to waste management efforts in rural Himalayan areas. Their roles range from household waste segregation to leading community-based initiatives. Women's participation in waste management addresses environmental concerns and empowers them economically and socially. Women play a crucial role in educating their families and communities about the importance of waste management. Their efforts help inculcate environmentally responsible behaviours in future generations. Women are primarily responsible for managing household waste. They ensure that waste is segregated into biodegradable and non-biodegradable categories, facilitating more efficient recycling and composting processes (Chand et al., 2014). In many Himalayan villages, women recycle and compost organic waste. These practices reduce the volume of waste and produce useful products like compost for agriculture, contributing to the local economy (Lohchab et al., 2003).

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