

TOURISM AND RECREATION

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SMALL SCALE TOURISM BUSINESSES IN RURAL IMERETI (GEORGIA) IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Rural tourism is gradually becoming one of the most important instruments for economic development in Georgia. The rural parts of Georgia have a large amount of attractions suitable for tourism and a high percentage of the local population are trained craftsmen. The rural population also has a reputation for hospitality. More than 60% of Georgians live in rural areas and 58 % of total employment is found in these areas. Despite from this, calculations show that almost one million people in Georgia live in poverty. The purpose of this research is to look at the role of women entrepreneurs in small scale rural tourism in the region of Imereti. Research in this topic is relevant and necessary due to the problems of poverty, especially in rural parts Imereti. Taken into account the recent popularity of rural tourism globally, it is interesting to study the potential of tourism as an alternative for economic development in the Imereti region. The article especially concentrate on how rural tourism could be a potential field in which women can be more integrated economically, politically and socially. Based on interviews with a selection of women entrepreneurs the article discusses potential, possibilities and constraints of rural tourism in the Imereti region. Based on the findings, the article concludes with suggestions and further recommendations for the development of rural tourism in the Imereti region.

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Introduction. Imereti is one of the regions of Western Georgia. “Georgia is one of the most unique tourist countries in the world” [1]. What is the uniqueness of Georgia? Georgia is an attractive for tourists, because It is a country of centuries of culture, a country that is at the junction of many cultures: Georgia Cradle of Wine - Wine and grapes are an integral part of the culture of Georgia. Back in the X in BC. Georgian squeezed grapes and placed in pottery vessels called "kvevri". This tradition of wine aging is used to this day. Ancient Georgian traditional Qvevri wine making method ¹, as well as Living Culture of three writing systems of the Georgian Alphabet and Georgian Polyphonic Singing were inscribed on the representative list of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of

¹ Ancient Georgian traditional Qvevri wine-making method. Inscribed in 2013 (8.COM) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. UNESCO

Humanity¹; Georgia is the most ecologically diverse country in Europe; There are 12 different climate zones and 49 types of soil; Europe's highest permanently inhabited settlements are villages Bochorna (2327 m) and Ushguli (2200 m); The oldest thread in the world – flax fibers (34 000 years old) discovered in Imereti/Georgia, Dzuzuana cave; Kutaisi and Mtskheta are among the world's 15 most ancient cities, Kutaisi (2000 BC), Mtskheta (1100 BC); The "Historical Monuments of Mtskheta and Kutaisi became a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Imereti is distinguished by a multitude of natural resources, flora and fauna existing in Georgia. There are more than 250 historical monuments in the region. Especially it is necessary to single out the monastic complex of Gelati, included in the UNESCO World Heritage List monuments. Also it should be noted Bagrati Cathedral, Ubis Monastery, Motsameta and Kazhis Sveti, Prometheus Caves and Sataplia, Okace Canyon, Kinzha Falls, popular with local and foreign tourists.

In addition, the existence of traditional family wine cellars - marani and traditional for the region varieties of grapes - makes the region attractive for lovers of rural tourism.

Despite this, a high level of poverty remains the main social challenge of the country and especially in the villages of Imereti. One of the ways of economic and social development of the village is the development of rural tourism [2]. The last few years, the popularity of rural tourism in Georgia, in particular in Imereti, is growing. The basis of interest of visitors is acquaintance with the traditional cultural heritage.

This study is due to the recent interest in rural tourism as a factor in overcoming poverty and the increasing participation of women in the economic, political and social life of the country.

As noted in the UNWTO Global Report on the Status of Women in Tourism "Most experts agree that women make up a large proportion of the workforce, particularly in the developing regions, and that there is greater potential for women in the sectors of the economy. As a result, despite the inevitable risks involved, the tourism industry has become a leading engine for women's empowerment." [3, p.10].

The purpose of the research is to study the role of women entrepreneurs in small-scale rural tourism in the Imereti region.

Research methodology: At the first stage of the study, a literature review was undertaken to collect and synthesize existing information on the socio-economic situation in Imereti and the activity of women. At the second stage, a sample was made and contact was established with women engaged in entrepreneurship in rural tourism, women of different professions who started activities in tourism and achieved good results. At the next stage, interviews were conducted on the basis of the questionnaire. The final stage in the work was to analyze the data obtained and make recommendations.

The impact of globalization on the socio-economic situation of Imereti.

Globalization is an ongoing process that naturally causes assimilation, and sometimes the disappearance of those peoples and cultures that do not work out the proper immunity. We need a careful attitude to our past, to the culture of our ancestors and to pass it from generation to generation. On the one hand, globalization is aimed at unification and standardization of life norms, which by itself implies the disappearance of the original cultures. On the other hand, there are societies for which globalization represents a good opportunity for the development and establishment of one's own place in the world. This is especially true for small crops [5].

In the conditions of globalization, the villages of Georgia are emptying with great speed, because of which local culture and history are lost. Georgia is a country with a great history, each of its regions and villages are distinguished by originality, although the number of the population in villages is decreasing annually [6].

As of January 1, 2016, 42.8% of Georgia's population lives in the countryside, which is 5.2% less than in 2014, according to the same data, 51.5% of the population live in rural areas in Imereti [7].

In the region poverty is high; according to official figures it is 28%, of which only 30% receive benefits. In the region, 1.5% of the population is refugees / displaced persons. Recently, labor migration from the region has been typical of such countries as Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy and partly, to the CIS countries [8]. Of particular concern is the high rate of illegal migration of women from rural areas.

¹ Nomination "Living culture of three writing systems of the Georgian alphabet", which aimed at illustrating harmonious coexistence of three writing systems of Georgian alphabet in modern reality, was submitted to UNESCO in 2015 and it is Georgia's third intangible heritage monument inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Ancient Georgian traditional Qvevri and Georgian polyphonic singing were also inscribed on the list in 2013 and 2008, respectively.

Stopping migration and returning local residents to villages is possible with the development of agricultural entrepreneurship and, on its basis, the development and popularization of rural tourism. The population should have the ambition that the product they produce is vitally important for the economy and social development of the state. In each region it is necessary to produce a natural, innovative, individual product characteristic for this region, which will create diversity and attract tourists. We need to try to use the processes of globalization in our favor, with the goal of integrating with the world, not against, losing its history and culture [6].

One of the ways to preserve the identity is the restoration of ancient traditional cultures and technologies.

In this study, the target group is represented by women, which are an example of successful interaction between society, culture, economy and ecology. Who in the conditions of globalization could find their niche, preserving and popularizing culture of their country.

The role of women in rural business

As of January 1, 2016, 52.2% of the population of Georgia is women. Thus, it would seem that a woman in Georgia should perform an important role in the development of the country, as an economically active labor force. Although, the national culture and traditional attitude represent a different function of women in the family and, especially, in entrepreneurial activities. This traditional approach is particularly rooted in the regions.

According to the data of 2015, the total number of employed in Georgia was 47.9% of the population. 47.2% of the employed, are women, of whom 26.3% are engaged in the business sector. It should be noted that 61.8% of the total number of employees falls on the village. Thus, unemployment remains the main social challenge facing the country. At the same time, women's unemployment is characterized by additional barriers and factors, such as cultural relations, traditional duties of childcare, differences in wages, etc. The average earnings of women are 1.5 times less than for men, and in Imereti - 1.7 times [7].

According to the statistics of the Georgian National Tourism Administration in 2016, the employment rate of women was 52.8%, and in Imereti 63.2% [10].

Despite the fact that public opinion tends to give preference to men in all spheres of activity, women are increasingly taking part in the economic, political and social life of the country. The success of women is also evident in areas that have traditionally been considered a male activity, for example, winemaking. Here, the stereotypes collapse.

One of the respondents is a young (23 years old) entrepreneur from the village of Obcha (Imereti) engaged in the production of biological wine. In their home marani (a room where wine is made and stored), it is possible to taste the wine, sustained in Qvevri, which was used by its great-grandfather.

She says: "I cultivate grapes with old methods/grandfather's methods/old-fashioned methods, and I keep wine in traditional kvevri (an earthenware jug for wine buried in the ground). We do not use chemical fertilizers. Previously, there were no chemicals, and the grapes were fertilized only by natural means. The production of such wine is a costly and time-consuming process. But he has a different bouquet and aroma, as well as quality. Biological wine is more expensive than usual, but it is popular among tourists".

For many tourists, Georgia is a country of winemaking, but few know that the tradition of making different kinds of cheese in this country is centuries old. Each region has its own technology for making cheese. Imeretian cheese is very popular in the country; it is used to make famous khachapuri.

In the course of the study, we found out what are the barriers and challenges from the point of view of the inclusion of women in business, as well as the extent to which the rights of women entrepreneurs in general, and in particular in rural tourism, are protected in Georgia? How much is the environment adapted in Georgia so that women can engage in tourism in the countryside?

Studies have shown that the business environment in Georgia is quite favorable for starting and developing business. However, at the legislative level, there are no discriminatory norms against women. According to the International bank, Georgia is among the top ten countries in the rating of ease of doing business [9].

Women in Georgia have no problems with the opportunity to have a business, their rights are protected. The problems here are only from the point of view of the attitude of the public, but this is gradually changing, thanks to the support of family members and friends. Although, if a woman achieves greater success than a man, this can be the cause of discontent in the family. Respondents note that they do not experience any pressure or obstacle to the mental nature of the

gender-related aspect, but in general, stress is highly related to agricultural activities, with market demand and product quality.

According to one of the respondents: "Women's rights to have a business in Georgia are fully protected. In our environment, many projects for women entrepreneurs are gradually starting up. Interestingly, the positive attitude of society towards women entrepreneurs. At the same time, the problem is to find finances and then find a consumer in the market".

Respondents specifically note: the exemption from income taxes and the program for supporting small and medium-sized businesses "Producing in Georgia", within which they received a grant to start business in the countryside, including tourism. Some on the basis of their farms have prepared infrastructure for the reception of tourists, others built a hotel near the heritage.

One of the respondents noted that the Young Farmers Association of Georgia, which, by the way, is run by a young, energetic woman, helps novice entrepreneurs in the village to establish contacts with the markets, advertise, organize meetings and trainings in developed European countries, etc.

In Georgia, the state carries out various projects that promote business development, but none of them specifically takes into account the promotion of women entrepreneurs in order to increase the availability of finance. Studies have shown that for women, relations with banks are still complicated. Despite the fact that lately offers of loans for women entrepreneurs have increased, in order to obtain high credits for women entrepreneurs, it is necessary to fight a lot.

"Relations with banks are still difficult for women, despite the fact that there were many loan offers for women entrepreneurs this year. Until now, a big fight for high credit is needed for a woman entrepreneur to approve a loan".

The main tourist products offered by the village to consumers are acquaintance with the Marani culture and wine tasting; familiarity with the traditional Imeretian cuisine; vacation with family in a well-equipped rural house with food from environmentally friendly products, where children have the opportunity to get acquainted with pets and care for them; participation in the collection of grapes (rtveli); acquaintance with the natural and cultural heritage, etc.

As it turned out, the geography of tourists varied: Ukraine, Israel, Russia, Poland, Great Britain, Germany, Latvia, Norway, Czech Republic and so on.

But there are certain problems for the development of rural tourism, which the state must solve. First of all, this infrastructure - water supply, bad roads, lack of road signs and signs, it is important to organize training courses that will help women in developing their own business initiatives and in the subsequent effective management.

Among the problems faced by women in connection with the start of tourist industry in the countryside are called the financial one, to prepare the infrastructure for the reception of guests, to buy inventory, etc., as well as knowledge of the tourism industry (tourism specificity, tourist product creation, service). But the most difficult for them was to bring to the consumer information about themselves, when the village is not involved in the tourist industry. For advertising, they use mostly social networks and personal contacts.

Studies have shown that the lack of entrepreneurship experience in rural tourism acts as a subjective impeding factor, creates additional psychological barriers: fear, self-doubt, in addition, an incorrect assessment of risks, expected benefits and own opportunities. To form important entrepreneurial competencies education components are essential for obtaining theoretical knowledge and applying this knowledge in practice.

To develop sectoral competencies, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation with formal educational systems - higher and professional educational institutions.

Women advise potential women entrepreneurs in the villages of Imereti, engage in beekeeping, plant growing, production of dried fruits, viticulture, cheese production (Imeretian cheese is very popular in Georgia), it is also important to open cafes, hotels, making souvenirs specific to the region, and on its basis with it is tourism, which is a very lucrative business. Thus, in our respondents the income from tourism on average is about 20% of the total income of the farm, despite the fact that they have recently engaged in this business. In addition, they create jobs (at least 2-3).

The study showed that involvement in rural tourism helps to reduce the illegal migration and employment of women without separation from the family.

Women entrepreneurs are proud to note that their social ties and status have expanded, both in the family, in the community, and in the region.

Among the qualities that a woman must possess in order to become a successful entrepreneur, most respondents noted, that it's " knowledge, diligence, sense of responsibility, love for the work she is doing, and purposefulness".

Conclusions. Despite the fact that public opinion tends to give preference to men in all spheres of activity, women are increasingly taking part in the economic, political and social life of the country. The success of women is also evident in areas that were traditionally considered a male sphere of activity. They proved that a woman can be an entrepreneur, create jobs, contribute to the country's economy by using the process of globalization to develop and establish her own place in the world.

Recommendations.

1. State programs aimed at supporting entrepreneurship in rural areas should include activities aimed at the economic activation of women, in particular, for the development of initiative and motivation of women living in Imereti villages, state grants will be an effective tool. Such grants will enable women to develop basic entrepreneurial skills, gain initial experience and form the initial capital.

2. To form important entrepreneurial competencies, educational components are essential for obtaining theoretical knowledge and applying this knowledge in practice.

To develop sectoral competencies, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation with formal educational systems - higher and professional educational institutions.

3. For effective communication, it is necessary to create a single information base on women entrepreneurs.

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