

Participation of Women in the Decision-Making Process Vis-À-Vis the Development of Rural Tourism in Mawlynnong Village, Meghalaya

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Abstract

Rural women have a vital role in many parts of community life, but they aren't usually allowed to be involved in major decisions, or their participation in any decisions is limited. In India, women are key players in tourism, but when it comes to decision making their roles are often restricted. However, in Meghalaya, women are considered and thought to be in good shape and have better autonomy when compared with other women in different parts of the country. The study of the research was conducted in the Mawlynnong village, which is found in Meghalaya. This study investigates women's engagement in the decision-making process for rural tourism development. The Paper opted for an exploratory study using a field survey and questionnaire. The study's participants consist of the female residents of the village who are engaged in tourism-related activities. The results show that even though women faced challenges, they were positively involved in decision-making concerning tourism development.

Keywords: Tourism, Rural Tourism, Development, Participation, Decision Making, Mawlynnong

Introduction

The growth and development of tourism communities cannot be detached from participation. Therefore, for communities to achieve the dual goals of both satisfying tourists and creating long-term benefits for the locals in destination areas, they have to enthusiastically participate in the development and growth of tourism (Simmons, 1996). Participation, in essence, refers to the active engagement of community members as stakeholders, wherein they exert influence and exercise control over the developmental processes occurring within their individual localities (Adinda Fitri et al., 2022). As defined by The World Bank Participation Sourcebook (1996), “Participation refers to the proactive involvement of various stakeholders, including local communities, in influencing and collaboratively exercising control over developmental initiatives

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and the decisions and resources that impact these". Generally, the result of engagement benefits in offering an insight into how effectively many relevant stakeholders were involved actively during decision-making, which allows for citizen participation to make sound decisions on certain projects (The World Bank Participation Sourcebook, 1996).

The concept of "community participation" describes a form of purposeful activity where individuals identify themselves as citizens by taking on the opportunities and responsibilities associated with active citizenship. Such participation may include engagement in self-government or autonomy, response to any decisions that influence a person's life, and problem-solving with other members of the community on common interests (Van Til, 1984). According to Skelcher (1993), community participation implies a conscious attempt to avoid paternalistic bureaucracy, in which agencies believe they have an intimate knowledge of how members of the community think and are best positioned to decide what is right or wrong for them. Brohman (1996) put forward that community participation was a foremost strategic approach through which problems associated with tourism in developing countries could be managed. Further, as Cohen and Uphoff (1980) point out, the first thing about community participation in development is contact with processes of decision-making.

From sitting on the sidelines to actively participating, local communities can contribute their part in decision-making in a variety of ways, from varying degrees of participation to complete non-participation, and from representation to the utilisation of referendums. Based on the available literature, it is primarily that people who live in communities located at tourist destinations can be either positively or negatively affected by tourism. Therefore, it is vital that these communities enthusiastically participate in decision-making about tourism growth and development if they are expecting benefits from it (Murphy, 1985; Lea, 1988). Furthermore, it is anticipated that local communities will always benefit and see their ordinary way of life and principles preserved by their participation or engagement in the decision-making process (Wells 1996; Gunn 1994; Mitchell, Reid, 2001). Therefore, the host populations must be at the center of decision-making processes in this regard, and thus, we can ensure an equitable supply of benefits from tourism while safeguarding their distinctive lifestyles and values (Chok, Macbeth, 2007; Li, 2006; Tosun, 2000; Timothy, 1999). Nevertheless, the primary focus of community participation often is on the advantages of tourism development and the decision-making process (Tosun 2000; Timothy 1999; Gibson, Marks, 1995). Indeed, it is crucial for the destination community to possess knowledge about both the negative and the positive impacts related to the growth of tourism.

Literature Review

Decision-making in rural tourism: The role of women

Rural women have a vital role in many parts of community life, but they aren't usually allowed to be involved in major decisions or their participation in any decisions is often limited. Studies have shown that women have high levels of participation in numerous family-related labours, such as purchasing groceries and household activities (Priyanka, Ghadei, 2022). However, their decision-making power is partial because the majority of the decisions are made by their husbands or fathers (Gupta, 2020).

Undoubtedly, rural tourism is considered one of the tools that can boost the economic growth and development of any region by stimulating investment, generating money, and

creating job opportunities. Consequently, this may result in an enhancement of the overall well-being of individuals and societies. The nature of tourism enables women to balance job and family obligations (Cohen, 1972). According to Malek and Costa (2014), women's participation in diverse tourism-related activities may foster their voice, empowerment, and independence, while also altering the gendered stereotypes of labour and decision-making within local communities. Hence, their contribution by taking part in decisions holds a significant position for the overall prosperity of the community in tourism development.

The participation of women within the local community has been notable in various kinds of socio-economic activities, encompassing small-scale entrepreneurial ventures and endeavours aimed at fostering environmental consciousness. These initiatives possess the inherent capacity to generate interest among tourists at the local level (Ismail, 2014). In Paledah Agro Tourism Village, the empowerment of women has been attained through the establishment and development of diverse productive enterprises. These women actively participate in the processing and production of agricultural goods, which are then marketed inside the agro-tourism site (Komariah et al., 2019). Additionally, the prominent role of women in the vast number of activities and taking part in any decision is of great consequence in the progress and growth of tourism on Galo Galo Island (Soleman, 2020). Similarly, many women in Samosir are engaged in the tourism sector, from operating and managing businesses to putting on cultural performances, and some have even started their tourist traps. Both clan land rentals and their heritage land provide tourism opportunities. In terms of authority, women are in the driver's seat, particularly in financial and business management, and they reap the rewards of exploiting commercial outcomes. Their involvement in the tourism industry benefits their families and helps Samosir as a whole (Syahriani, 2018).

The level to which women participate in decision-making is governed by several factors. Research has shown that age, qualifications, and duration of business are some of the internal variables that have a considerable influence on the engagement of women in the growth of rural tourism entrepreneurship (Kaihatu et al., 2020). Additionally, the daily work schedule of rural women, which includes demanding and arduous tasks, can also influence their ability to participate in the act of making decisions (Gupta, 2020). In their research, Cvijanović and Gajić (2020) emphasise the precarious position of women residing in the rural areas of Serbia, where they are compelled to perform arduous physical labour for meagre compensation, and where their property ownership is restricted. Further, the women occupied lower positions in various establishments and made insufficient contributions to the sector of rural tourism development.

In Zanzibar's tourism development, women's participation in decision-making was very high, the finding indicates that there is a notable adverse effect on women's involvement in decision-making processes, which may be attributed to both the educational attainment level and the type of tourism activities engaged in (Abdalla et al., 2022). Similarly, in Mersin, Turkey, education has a notable role in deciding the level of engagement of rural women in taking part in various decisions (Rad et al., 2012). Despite expanding the tourism sector in Iran, rural women continue to encounter challenges related to dependency and a lack of favourable economic and social standing. These obstacles persist due to gender inequality and cultural norms that restrict women's access to various resources and thus limit their engagement in decision-making processes (Arzjani, Rahiminezhad, 2011). Fathizadeh et al. (2022), also highlighted several variables that impact the involvement of women in rural tourism at both small and large scales, such as socio-geographical proximity, patriarchal structure, financial aid, self-confidence, the absence of role conflict and family support.

The literature on women's engagement in decision-making for tourism development emphasizes the value of gender equality for the effective growth of the tourism sector. Although some improvements have been recorded in some parts of the world, socialization factors such as culture, gender roles, lack of education and power relations still contribute to the nonparticipation of women in decision-making. This literature review also identifies that where women have been empowered, they have addressed the social issues better and encouraged sustainable and more community-oriented tourism.

Rural women in India and tourism

In India whether in urban or rural areas, women are key players in the tourism sector. They are crucial to the growth and development of tourism, which can boost economies and help women in developing nations escape poverty (Pathania, 2017). Women in the rural areas of Kerala, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan are actively involved in the tourism sector. They take part by playing their required roles while tourists visit these places. They started important business ventures that give a lot of benefit to their families and the communities they live. It has helped to reduce poverty, make women more independent and preservation of ancient native traditions (Kumari, Shankar, 2020). In addition, women in Rajasthan are key to growing tourism in rural areas. They take up important roles in decision-making about tourism development. They've been able to break old thinking ways and beat disinterest from society. This helped them make good businesses in tourism (Ahuja, 2012). Likewise, setting up tourism initiatives in the countryside of India's state 'Jammu and Kashmir', played a vital role in helping poor women, thereby helping them to gain social status (Slathia et al., 2015). Furthermore, women's involvement in the tourism sector in Kerala also pointed out that women were participating in the tourism sector in the form of cultural performances as well as in terms of informal business that contributed a handsome amount to the tourism sector. However, they found themselves bearing the brunt of the impacts of tourism by being unable to belong to the official decision-making structures that framed overall tourism issues and policies, let alone the community-based agenda (Ahuja, 2012). But, in rural areas of Maharashtra, there is a discrepancy between males and females when it comes to decision-making. This happens mostly in three main areas: farming, caring for livestock and household management. The research showed that men have more power and control in farming and taking care of animals but making family decisions is something they do together (Antwal et al., 2023).

From the above literature review, the current status shows that women are underrepresented in the decision-making processes in the Indian tourism sector. However, some positive impacts have emerged especially in the Rural tourism strategies and Rural policies on women's empowerment especially at the grassroots level. To realise the full potential of tourism growth for India, it is, therefore, important to embrace diversification schemes that include women in management and executive positions. The empowerment of institutions, education, and training, as well as the overcoming of socio-cultural barriers, may be regarded as the next developmental steps to gender equity in tourism development.

Women and tourism in Meghalaya

In Meghalaya, women played a major role because the state followed the Matrilineal system in practice. This system defines the lineage and inheritance in the female line and pays a lot of respect to women's role in the family and culture (Kharkongor, 2018; Nongsiej, 2018). None-

theless, due to this matrilineal tradition, women still do not have much of a decision-making role, particularly within the political and traditional realms. The roles of women in local governance, especially in decentralised institutions such as the traditional village councils (*durbars*), are greatly limited in decision-making responsibilities (Kharkongor, 2018). This comparison gives a glimpse of the tension between the traditional status and the modern social status of women in Meghalaya. Although the matrilineal system offers a different social structure, it does not create a balance for women where they enjoy equal decision-making opportunities in various sectors.

However, in Meghalaya, women are considered and thought to be in good shape and have better autonomy when compared with other women in different parts of the country (Marbaniang, Singh, 2022). Meghalaya is predominantly known for being the indigenous homeland of the Khasis, the Jaintias, and the Garos tribes. In Khasi and Jaintia societies, because of the traditions, social and family structure, kinship system, Marriage, and Tribal policies they followed, women belonging to these societies seem to be different from other societies and they are more empowered and self-independent. Meghalaya has successfully enabled its women to fully exercise their freedoms and benefit from social, economic, and cultural prospects. Within the family structure, women play a central role as they inherit property, govern the household, and carry their clan's name through successive generations (Shangpliang, 2012).

In the field of tourism, especially in Meghalaya, nature-based tourism offers opportunities for sustainable well-being and the preservation of natural resources while empowering indigenous women within their rural communities. A substantial number of indigenous women in Meghalaya are engaged in various tourism-related activities, such as hospitality and transportation, which provide them with livelihood opportunities and income (De, 2013). Despite this, women who work in rural areas of Meghalaya face some problems. These include not having enough safety and security measures in place for women workers, not having a model or framework for showcasing their culture in a short period, not having a place where women can exchange culture and communicate with people from outside the area, and not enough people being aware of the changes that are happening (Kharkongor et al., 2019).

Methodology

The researchers of this study conducted their investigation in the region of Mawlynnong, located in the state of Meghalaya. The researcher employed descriptive statistical techniques to determine the socioeconomic backgrounds of the female participants and the level of their involvement in decision-making processes. Both primary and secondary sources are used in this study. The secondary data consists of both printed and electronic publications obtained from diverse sources, serving as the foundational information for the study. The collection of primary data was conducted via a field survey and interviews on a predetermined schedule. The study's participants consist of the female residents of the village who are engaged in tourism-related activities, either directly or indirectly.

Study area

Mawlynnong is a small village located within the forested East Khasi Hills District, around 92 kilometres from Shillong, the state capital of Meghalaya, India. The exquisite village includes 102 houses, which house about 550 individuals who belong to a state-native tribal culture (Lyn-

gdoh, 2017). The majority of the villagers follow Christianity and farming is their primary source of revenue. They cultivate their plots of land in the common forest that lies next to their village. The main agricultural products grown in this region include betel nuts, betel leaves, pineapple, broomsticks, jackfruit, bay leaves, honey, etc.

According to Discover India magazine, the village was named the cleanest in Asia in 2003. It gained international recognition in 2006 after being acknowledged by UNESCO, the BBC, and National Geographic in 2004. From then on, Mawlynnong Village offers a variety of tourism experiences, including ecotourism, responsible tourism, village tourism, and even sustainable tourism.

Mawlynnong's industrious citizens went beyond aesthetics. In the matrilineal society of the Khasi tribe, women occupy significant roles, and the tiny village claims a 100% female literacy rate, which stands in juxtaposition to the national average of 65% in India. According to the locals, Mawlynnong's women are the reason the village maintains its beautiful and peaceful image (Lonely Planet, 2020). Hence, the women of Mawlynnong play a significant role in developing tourism within their community and setting an example for others.

Objectives of the study

- a) To investigate how often women participate in decisions that are related to the development of tourism in the study area.
- b) To determine the correlation between the qualification of the respondents and members of NGOs with decision-making in rural tourism development.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Profile of Respondents

Table 1 provides a concise summary of the demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in the study. The data includes details on age, primary employment, educational attainment, monthly earnings, and participation in tourism-related businesses.

Regarding age, the population was divided into five age groups. In terms of age, the median calculated is 26-35 years. Nevertheless, upon further examination, it is possible to assert with accuracy that most female respondents fall between the age range of 16 to 55 years old and older. A larger percentage of the respondents possess a secondary education or higher. In general, this suggests that the village has a greater literacy rate and highlights the significant value of education among women. Concerning employment, the data indicates a scarcity of women who are directly involved in tourism-related businesses. These findings suggest that tourism does not serve as the principal source of income for women in the study area. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the respondents showed low levels of income, with more than half estimating an income between Rs 10,000 and Rs 20,000.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
16 – 25	24	18.8
26-35	52	40.6
36-45	28	21.9
46-55	12	9.4
55 above	12	9.4
Total	128	100.0
Main Occupation		
Tourism Business	8	6.3
Govt. employee	8	6.3
Student	12	9.4
Housewife	8	6.3
Farming	24	18.8
Others	68	53.1
Total	128	100.0
Qualification of the Respondents		
Below Secondary	36	28.1
Secondary – Higher Secondary	76	59.4
Graduate	16	12.5
Total	128	100.0
Monthly income of the respondent		
Below 10,000	16	12.5
10,000-20,000	64	50.0
20,000-30,000	20	15.6
30,000-40,000	4	3.1
40,000 above	24	18.8
Total	128	100.0

Participation in tourism and hospitality training and Membership in related Organisations

One of the major sources in enhancing the provision of high quality-of-service is training women to improve the standards offered in the tourism sector thereby improving customer satisfaction and the increase in businesses. Skill development empowers women with the right qualifications to aspire for leadership positions within the tourism industry thus pushing down the glass ceiling to allow for diversity. Women, when trained, can train society through their earnings by reinvesting for the betterment of their families and generally towards the growth of socio-economics in society. Looking at Table 2, 68.8% of women have no tourism or hospitality industry-related training, this indicates that the majority of the women in the village have limited training skills and knowledge in the tourism sector. On the other hand, 31.3% of the female respondents obtained training through various programs organised by NGOs and Government agencies.

Furthermore, Meghalaya is home to several unique women's organisations, especially in the villages that are quite active in fostering community development and progress. This shows that the organisations of women in these villages have a crucial responsibility in the upliftment of the socio-economic development and cultural preservation of the society. According to the data collected, which is shown in Table 2, although a smaller number of women are members of a certain organisation in the village, they play an energetic responsibility in the development of tourism.

Table 2. *Training and Membership*

	Training in the domain of tourism and the Hospitality sector		Member of organisation	
	Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	40	31.3	60	46.9
No	88	68.8	68	53.1
Total	128	100.0	128	100.0

Perceptions of women's participation in decision making in tourism development

The Table 3 demonstrates that most of the participants agree with the high level of community involvement and individualism controlling conservation decisions, while the results for participation in tourism development are somehow ambiguous. Looking at the key factors involved concerning the subject of the study, it can be found that communication and information dissemination seem to be the most dependent on improvement. Also, the majority of respondents feel that there are no great issues or challenges for women while involved in the decision-making process, but the perceived control by the local authority is relatively high.

Table 3. *Women's participation in decision making*

Items	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. dev	Remark
All decisions were taken by the whole community or village.	92 (71.9)	36 (28.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.72	0.45	High Perception
I usually participate in decision-making regarding tourism development	71 (55.5)	13 (10.2)	0 (0)	36 (28.1)	8 (6.3)	3.80	1.49	High Perception
I was informed regarding any decision about tourism development.	48 (37.5)	42 (32.8)	0 (0)	31 (24.2)	7 (5.5)	3.73	1.33	Low Perception
I make my own decisions about the conservation of culture and the natural environment.	112 (87.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	16 (12.5)	0 (0)	4.63	1.00	High Perception
There are various challenges women face in decision-making, especially in the development of tourism	12 (9.5)	12 (9.5)	0 (0)	104 (81.3)	0 (0)	2.47	1.00	Low Perception
Local authorities control all decisions regarding tourism development.	83 (64.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	39 (30.5)	6 (4.7)	3.90	1.52	High Perception

Note: SA= Strongly agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly disagree, Weighted average= $23.25/6=3.88$

Influences of women's educational qualification on tourism decision-making

According to Khare (2021), qualification is considered a significant factor that affects the involvement of women in decision-making (Khare, 2021). The research performed by Misra et al (2021), declared that the educational qualification of women is a significant instrument that empowers them. However, in Mawlynnong village women's educational qualifications have no impact on any decision related to the development of tourism. This can be understood by the following hypothesis test that is shown in Table 4.

Hypothesis:

H₁- There is a significant association between the respondent's qualifications and their participation in decision-making related to the development of tourism.

The connection between categorical variables, namely the qualification of the female respondents and their participation in decision-making connected to the growth of tourism, was analysed using chi-square statistics. The analysis suggests that there is no significant correlation, at a 5% significance level, between the qualification of the female respondents and their participation in decision-making regarding the growth of tourism ($\chi^2 = 2.505$, $df=3$, $p=.286$). Therefore, H₁ was not supported.

Table 4, to identify the association between the qualification of the respondents and NGO members with the participation in decision-making for rural tourism development.

Table 4. Chi-Square Tests

	Value (χ^2)	df	Asymptotic Significance (p)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.505 ^a	2	0.286
Pearson Chi-Square	0.054	1	0.816
N of Valid Cases	128		

^a 0 cells (0.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.50

Women's NGO members and participation in decision-making

Since the beginning of the 21st century, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that focus on tourism have gained more and more significance as an alternative and valid source of development assistance for many developing countries. These NGOs have very significant roles in the development of the rural areas in India. These organisations have been very much proactively involved in the process of rural development and the socially deprived sections of the population are largely dependent on the works of different NGOs (Ramakrishna, 2013). Similarly, women's non-government organisations in Mawlynnong play a crucial role in the development of tourism. However, being or not being a member of an NGO does not influence the decision-making process. The following hypothesis test (Table 4) shows the result of the association between women's NGO members and their participation in decision-making.

H₂- There is a significant association between members of NGOs and their participation in decision-making related to the development of tourism.

This case suggests a meagre chi-square value (0.054) with 1 degree of freedom, and the p-value is 0.816. The high p-value indicates that there is no significant association between being a member of NGOs and participation in decision-making.

The above study examined the association between variables, specifically the relationship between qualification and decision-making, as well as the relation between being a member of NGOs and decision-making. Therefore, based on the study's limitations and chosen significance level, there is insufficient evidence to support the existence of a significant relationship between respondents' qualification and their involvement in tourism decision-making, as well as between being a member of NGOs and participating in decision-making related to tourism development. These results have implications for understanding the dynamics of participation in making decisions related to tourism. The qualifications and membership in NGOs do not seem to have a substantial impact on the active participation of people in designing tourism development projects. Therefore, understanding the limitations of this research is crucial. The findings are derived from a particular sample, and there may be additional variables that were not taken into account in this research that might affect involvement in decision-making. This emphasises the complex nature of the elements that impact participation in decision-making processes and emphasises the need for more study in this field.

Correlation Matrix of variables

The table 5 demonstrates a correlation matrix of six variables which have been described as DMP1, DMP2, DMP3, DMP4, DMP5, and DMP6. The values in the matrix are in the form of Pearson correlation coefficients which measure the nature and magnitude of the linear relationship between the variables. Positive signs mean a direct relationship between the variables and negative signs mean an inverse relationship between the variables. Statistically significant correlations are marked by asterisks, where one asterisk (*) is used where the level of significance is at 0.05 % level and two asterisks (**) at the 0.01 level. These correlations give an understanding of the relationship between these performance variables.

Table 5. Correlation Matrix

	DMP1	DMP2	DMP3	DMP4	DMP5	DMP6
DMP1	1	.093	.120	-.026	.033	.050
DMP2	.093	1	.853**	.332**	.167	.960**
DMP3	.120	.853**	1	.278**	.002	.864**
DMP4	-.026	.332**	.278**	1	-.012	.334**
DMP5	.033	.167	.002	-.012	1	.218*
DMP6	.050	.960**	.864**	.334**	.218*	1

** Significant at the 1%, * Significant at the 5%

Based on the correlation matrix table provided below, the data suggests that women in Mawlynnong who actively participate in decision-making related to the growth and development of tourism are more likely to be well-informed about any decisions to be taken.

This insinuates that there is a level of transparency and communication within the community or village. In addition, women who exercise autonomy in preserving their cultural heritage and natural environment are also inclined to engage in decision-making processes concerning the development of tourism. This suggests that women in this village possess a strong

sense of personal accountability towards their culture and the environment. Thus, it is critical to do further research on the connections between community involvement and local government concerning tourism growth in the studied area.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Participation of women in decision-making roles related to the development of rural tourism significantly enhances the sustainability and resilience of rural communities. Involving them in any decision-making process harnessed their potential and diverse perspectives in successful rural initiatives. Without the involvement and commitment of women, tourism growth in any community would not be achievable. Women provide goods, services, skills, and financial support to support this business. This study examined how women are involved in decisions on the development of rural tourism. The findings suggest that the women of Mawlynnong aspire to be involved in making decisions. The researcher has also identified some difficulties faced by the women in participation in tourism development in the study area, which include a lack of information regarding any decision to be taken, house chores activities and women are usually never allowed to discuss any decision in the community as men are more dominant. Regardless of these factors, when it comes to matters concerning the growth of tourism, the results indicate that women in Mawlynnong take an active part in how decisions are made in the community where they live.

To address this situation, Community members (Dorbar) and other stakeholders who are anxious about the future generations should help to promote and support further participation of women in planning tourism development as a whole including policy formation and implementation. In addition, it is crucial to make collaborative efforts to include a significant number of women in a wide range of committees or local authorities, ensuring their active involvement in all decision-making processes. This collaboration is so important towards that desired achievement within the community. Moreover, to promote the participation of women in the decision-making process for the development of tourism, local authorities and the relevant departments of the government might take a variety of activities at their disposal. It would be beneficial to implement more efficient methods of encouraging public involvement. Women should be included in education and awareness programmes with the goal of assisting them in becoming more active in participating in the growth and development of tourism services. Aside from the bodies mentioned earlier, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should play a significant role in educating the nation's residents on why tourism development is crucial for their particular regions. As a result, engaging women in tourism development would be an opportunity to develop their skills and empower them. Nevertheless, it is essential to give special emphasis to the significance of participation in improving the prospects of tourism in different regions.

Further research should be directed towards understanding how the conditions could be established towards women's participation in the tourism development initiatives of Meghalaya. This includes education, leadership training as well as gender policies for the integration of women in the governance of tourism. Furthermore, evaluating the relationships between gender, ethnic origin, and class allows considering the peculiarities of misogynistic experiences of women in different areas of the state.

In conclusion, one can state that Meghalaya's matrilineal culture could be the basis of women's rights and equality but there should still be efforts taken to tackle the issue of women's

engagement in decision making in the destination's tourism industry. By doing so the government will not only provide support to the tourism sector but will also contribute towards the faster development of the sector along with improvements in the overall development model in the state.

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Annexure A. Variables Coding

DMP1	All decisions were taken by the whole community or village.
DMP2	I usually participate in decision-making regarding tourism development
DMP3	I was informed regarding any decision about tourism development.
DMP4	I make my own decisions about the conservation of culture and the natural environment.
DMP5	There are various challenges women face in decision-making, especially in the development of tourism
DMP6	Local authorities control all decisions regarding tourism development.