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Submitted 1 July 1994

Resubmitted 21 September 1994

Resubmitted 5 October 1994

Accepted 18 October 1994

0160-7383(94)00098-0

The Female Gender in Greek Agrotourism

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The concept of agrotourism, as used in Greece, embraces tourism activities carried out in non-urban regions by individuals mainly employed in the primary or secondary sector of the economy. Such activities typically involve small tourism units of family or cooperative type, which offer accommodations, goods, and/or other services and provide a supplementary income for rural families and/or an independent income for women living in rural areas (Iakovidou 1992). Agrotourism is conceived as means of bringing opportunity to areas of natural beauty, traditional culture, and historical interest, by using these resources to stimulate the revitalization of rural economies in decline, while at the same time preserving cultural heritage and the natural environment (Turner 1993).

This research note, based on the results of secondary and field research by the authors, focuses upon the contribution of women's cooperatives to the development of agrotourism in Greece. Women's agrotourism cooperatives in Greece are based on developing rural women's traditional skills in managing the household unit—never before recognized as such—into professional capacity. Furthermore, rural women who are usually non-paid working members of the family farm may find in these cooperatives a source of independent income. Women's agrotourism cooperatives in Greece offer bed and breakfast, comprising accommodation in traditionally furnished, standard rooms

often with private facilities and traditional breakfast based on homemade produce. Complementary activities, such as restaurant and refreshment facilities, production and sale of traditional foodstuffs and crafts, organization of recreation and cultural activities, hosting for training seminars and conference tourism, and opportunities for visitor participation in traditional agricultural and ecological activities, contribute to the overall product offering.

To date, a total of eight women's agrotourism cooperatives are in existence in Greece. Three are established on the Aegean islands of Lesbos, Chios, and Kassos, one is on the Ionian island of Zakynthos, and the other four are established on the mainland. The average membership of a cooperatives is 30 women.

The development of women's agrotourism cooperatives in Greece could be described as an ongoing story of success and struggle. Some of their successes are due to the assets of the women themselves, such as the true "welcome to my home" hospitality and a genuine interest in pleasing the customer. In addition, other factors contributing to the progress of these cooperatives include the rich resource base and potential in terms of green/rural tourism "product," the need to supplement traditional income from agriculture, and a wish to maintain human resources in rural areas.

Key elements of success, often overlooked, are the benefits that have accrued to the women themselves. Through cooperatives, women have been able to contribute to the income of their families and to bring themselves a measure of economic independence. This has contributed to the recognition of the significant role played by women in the economic and social fabric of rural life. It has also been catalytic in raising their confidence and improving their social position in the local community. The daily contact of the women with people from a diversity of cultures and mentalities has offered them the chance to move beyond the limitations of their own "small" community, thus opening their horizons.

One important lesson is that warm and friendly home-based hospitality is not enough: it must be combined with a high standard of material comfort and professionalism if it is to attract and keep the higher income visitor in the area. A comfortable bed, traditional breakfast, and a little information about the area do not complete the tourism product. If the visitor is to stay more than one night, to spend his/her entire holiday in the area, full use must be made of the local resource base (nature, history, culture), together with invention of further activities and possibilities.

Two examples illustrate these ideas. In Petra, a seaside picturesque village of 1,000 inhabitants on the north coast of Lesbos island in the Aegean sea, 1983 saw the establishment of the first agrotourism cooperative in Greece. This was set up by 24 women offering bed and breakfast in their houses with capacity for 75 persons. Today, 36 women in the village are members of the cooperative providing 264 beds. They also make handicrafts, jams, and other homemade products that are sold in the cooperative's office. In addition to basic hospitality services, the cooperative organize other activities such as daytrips across the island, village walks, lessons in Greek language, traditional dancing and Greek cuisine, and preparation of traditional foodstuffs.

A spacious building rented by the cooperative in the village square houses the central booking office and a fully equipped restaurant, open to all. Among the clientele, 33% are foreign, especially German, Dutch, and French tourists, with the rest are Greek visitors. In 1990, the cooperative had 100% occupancy for 88 nights, and turnover reached 20 million drachmas (about US\$800,000). Eleven percent of the turnover went to taxes, 9% remained in the cooperative in order to cover the basic operational costs, and the remaining 80% was distributed among the women as wages. The cooperative oper-

ates year round, with peak occupancy mainly during the high season (June to August). This integrates well with farming activities, in particular olive growing, which take place during the winter months. Through the cooperative, the women have succeeded in developing their traditional skills in managing the household unit into professional capacity, and making a viable business out of renting rooms and offering "home-like" services to tourists. It is by working together, sharing skills, and pooling resources that they have managed this.

In Prespes, an area of extreme natural beauty located in North Greece on the border with Albania, home of wetlands with protected species, ski slopes, natural lakes, archaeological and byzantine sites, the other cooperative was developed. Established in March 1985, the cooperative of Agios Germanos originally had seven women members. Two years later, the cooperative opened three *Xenones* (guest houses) offering a total of 25 beds in 16 spacious traditionally furnished rooms with private bathroom. The agrotourism cooperative of Agios Germanos offers the visitor high quality traditional accommodations and meals, combined with tranquility of the countryside and the chance to explore the natural surroundings, as well as take part in activities and events that contribute to conservation of the environment and cultural heritage.

Today, the cooperative has 20 members, who work on a shift basis: two women each day prepare breakfasts and rooms, serve refreshments, take bookings, and organize check-in and check-out. In addition to accommodations, the cooperative has its own restaurant where traditional breakfasts and daily meals for groups of visitors are served, mainly during the summer. Members also sell homemade foodstuffs and liqueurs, through the cooperative.

As these two examples show, women's cooperatives have played an important role in the development of agrotourism and are arguably the most authentic instance of organized and structured agrotourism in Greece. Despite the difficulties they face in developing their tourism product, women's agrotourism cooperatives are gradually succeeding in placing their localities on the Greek "alternative tourism" map. They have achieved the creation of home-based hospitality services for tourists, while maintaining the natural, social, and cultural authenticity of rural areas. In addition, they have developed new economic activity potential in rural areas, boosting local economies, and creating employment opportunities both for the women themselves and for others in their communities. At the same time, they stimulate the revitalization of rural areas, while preserving cultural and natural heritage.

The participation of rural women in cooperatives has enabled them to value their skills and put them to productive use, by using their competences in managing the household in the context of an economic initiative—the cooperative enterprise. Through cooperatives, women have been able to contribute tangibly to the household income, gain a mastery of their own economic resources, and, at the same time, bring recognition of their role in the social and economic fabric of rural communities. However, to fulfill their potential in the context of alternative tourism in Greece, women's agrotourism cooperatives must be placed in the context of policy and strategy for tourism development, in which agrotourism is defined as an "authentic tourism product." An essential prerequisite is the formulation of a concrete concept of the "agrotourism product," which to date has not been specifically defined and which will represent a more diversified product than that currently offered by women's agrotourism cooperatives. □ □

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Submitted 29 August 1994

Revised 4 October 1994

Accepted 18 October 1994

0160-7383(94)00099-9

Female Professionals in the Japanese Tourism Industry

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The market for Japanese outbound travel doubled in size from 5.5 million in 1986, to 10 million in 1990, and over 12 million in 1993. Among this expanding market, Japanese female travelers have outpaced male travelers, expanding from 38% in 1988, to 42% of the total market in 1992 (Japan National Tourism Organization 1993). Past studies have agreed that the Japanese female market segment, especially that of young females, has been, and will continue to be, the most powerful and potential market segment (Japan Travel Bureau 1993; Morris 1990; Nishiyama 1989; Nozawa 1992; Travel Journal 1993).

While past studies highlighted the Japanese female market as having the greatest potential for further growth, virtually no studies have been done on the Japanese female as the supplier for Japanese outbound travel. This research note examines the role of women and their status in the Japanese tourism industry by investigating the historical and current working environment and conditions for Japanese female professionals in tourism-related industries—by identifying how Japanese female professionals have contributed to the rapid expansion of the Japanese female outbound travel market, and by speculating on future roles of female workers in tourism-related businesses in Japan.

The 1947 Japanese Constitution provided the legal equality between men and women in Japan, though changes and improvements in the workplace for Japanese women have been slow until the 1970s. Some companies set the retirement age for female workers as early as at age 30s and 40s, compared to age 50s for men, and chances for promotion were virtually nonexistent for female workers, even those with 20 years work experience (Iwai 1993:155). Gender equality in the workplace was first justified in Japan in the 1986 Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEO Law), which mandated equal opportunity for men and women in job recruitment, firing, placement, and promotion. Some regulations, which were originally enacted to protect women in the labor force, such as late-night work and holiday work, were relaxed in this law.

Prior to the EEO Law in 1986, however, Japanese women in tourism-