

# Annual Methodological Archive Research Review

<http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about>

Volume 3, Issue 5 (2025)

## The Role of Local Community and Women Empowerment in Tourism Development in Murree

Owais khan<sup>1</sup>, Adnan Ahmed Dogar<sup>2</sup>, Syeda Tahira Azhar<sup>3</sup>

### Article Details

### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** Sustainable tourism, women empowerment, local community, gender equality, community-based tourism development

#### <sup>1</sup>Owais khan

Assistant Professor, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Kohsar University Murree.  
[swatiowais4@gmail.com](mailto:swatiowais4@gmail.com)

#### <sup>2</sup>Dr Adnan Ahmed Dogar

Associate Professor, Tourism and Hospitality Management Kohsar University Murree.  
[adnandogar@kum.edu.pk](mailto:adnandogar@kum.edu.pk)

#### <sup>3</sup>Syeda Tahira Azhar

Lecturer, Tourism and Hospitality Management Kohsar University Murree.  
[tahira.archaeologist@gmail.com](mailto:tahira.archaeologist@gmail.com)  
Lahore, Pakistan. [rizwan.naqvi@ieee.org](mailto:rizwan.naqvi@ieee.org)

This article investigates the critical role of the local community, particularly women's empowerment, in promoting sustainable tourism development in Murree, Pakistan. Residents must actively participate to ensure that tourism growth corresponds with the region's socio-cultural and economic values. Women are increasingly recognized as important contributors in this context, particularly in the fields of hospitality, handicrafts, and cultural tourism. Their participation improves community well-being, promotes gender equality, and strengthens Murree's image as a culturally diverse and welcoming tourist destination. Despite these efforts, barriers such as restrictive gender norms, limited availability of assets, and low decision-making power continue to prevent women from fully participating. The significance of strengthening local women via training, education, and inclusive strategies is emphasized in the article. The positive view of women's participation in tourism held by the entire local community also reflects a rising understanding of the tourism sector's ability to promote inclusive growth, preserve regional heritage, and promote economic development. One of the most significant methods to promote sustainable tourism in Murree is to encourage women-owned enterprises and promote community-based tourism projects.

## **Tourism and Tourist**

Traveling for leisure, business, or other reasons to locations outside of one's normal surroundings for a maximum of one year in a row is referred to as tourism. For leisure, business, or other reasons, a tourist is defined by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as a person who travels to and stays in locations outside of their normal surroundings for longer than 24 hours but less than a year (UNWTO, n.d.).

## **Community Participation in Tourism Development**

Local communities' development and have a voice in the decisions that impact their environment and means of subsistence, community involvement is essential to the growth of the tourism industry. Rasoolimanesh (2016) divides community involvement into three categories:

1. The lowest level, where locals receive little income and have no influence over tourism development procedures.
2. Residents don't participate much and don't have much influence on decisions.
3. The highest level, where the community controls development processes and has complete decision-making authority.

## **Global Economic Impact of Tourism**

Tourism has become one of the fastest-growing industries globally. In 2023, the travel and tourism sector contributed approximately \$9.1 trillion to the global GDP, accounting for 9.1% of the total. This marked a 23.2% increase from 2022 and was only 4.1% below the 2019 pre-pandemic level (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2024).

## **Employment in Tourism**

The sector supported 330 million jobs worldwide in 2023, nearly matching pre-pandemic levels. This underscores tourism's role as a significant employer across various industries, including hospitality, transportation, and entertainment (Statista, 2024).

Looking ahead, the WTTC forecasts that in 2024, the travel and tourism sector will contribute a record \$11.1 trillion to the global GDP, representing 10% of the total. Employment is expected to rise to nearly 348 million jobs, surpassing the previous record set in 2019 (WTTC, 2024).

## **Participation of Local Community and Women Empowerment in Tourism Development in Murree**

A substantial body of research emphasizes the importance of community involvement in tourism development (Li, 2006; Tosun, 2006). As highlighted by Simmons (1994), tourism development processes are heavily dependent on residents' support and involvement. Without the cooperation and approval of the local community, tourism initiatives may face resistance, ultimately leading to project failure or conflicts. Tosun (2000) emphasized the need for participatory approaches during the early, or "exploration," stage of tourism development to ensure sustainable outcomes. Effective community participation helps mitigate potential misunderstandings and enhances the legitimacy of tourism-related policies and practices.

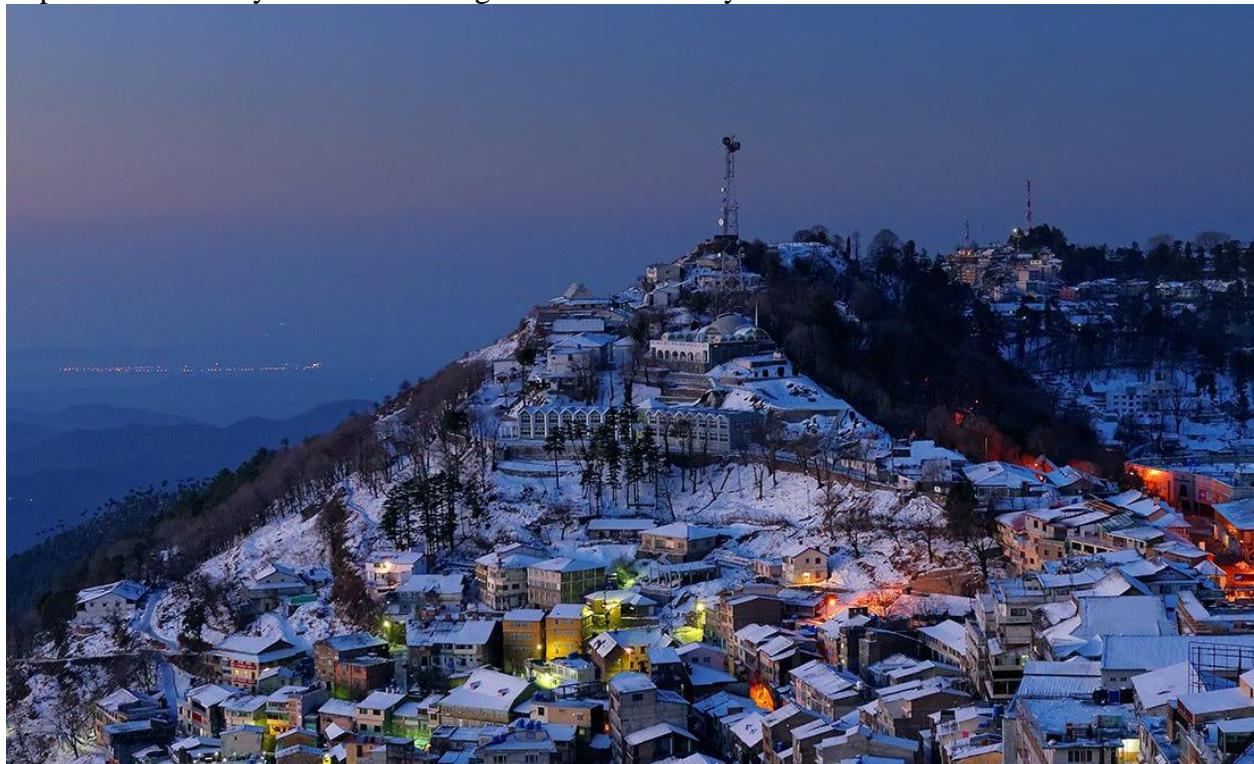
In the context of Murree, a popular hill station in Pakistan, community participation in tourism development is particularly crucial due to the area's reliance on tourism as a primary economic driver. Murree's picturesque landscapes, proximity to Islamabad, and cultural heritage make it a hotspot for both domestic and international tourists. However, challenges such as overcrowding, environmental degradation, and socio-economic inequalities call for a more inclusive approach to tourism planning (Ali & Pervez, 2020).

At the same time, it has been more widely acknowledged that women's involvement who are frequently underrepresented in economic and tourist planning is crucial to reaching sustainable

development objectives. In addition to playing significant roles in providing tourism services like hospitality, food production, and handicrafts, women are frequently the guardians of natural resources and cultural heritage. However, structural barriers such as limited access to capital, education, and decision-making forums hinder their full engagement in the tourism industry (Scheyvens, 2000). In Muree, local women can contribute significantly to tourism, especially in areas like cultural tourism, handicraft production, and hospitality services.

A study conducted by Michael (2009) in Barabarani village, Tanzania, explored community participation in tourism development, classifying it into three domains: involvement in decision-making, equitable benefit sharing, and contributions to poverty alleviation. Although this study was set in Tanzania, its findings are applicable to Muree, where residents have also expressed a strong desire to be involved in decision-making processes regarding tourism development (Ali, 2018). Local communities in Muree want to be actively involved in choices pertaining to environmental management, tourism infrastructure, and the allocation of tourism advantages. They also want openness in the development process. Women showed interest in engaging in tourism-related microenterprises, such as handicraft production, guiding services, and hospitality. This reflects broader trends where tourism serves as a platform for women's entrepreneurship and social mobility (Scheyvens, 1999).

Empirical studies suggest that tourism can be a transformative force for gender equity, but this potential can only be realized if supportive institutional frameworks and capacity-building initiatives are in place (Ashley, Roe, & Goodwin, 2001). Therefore, in locations like Muree, incorporating community and women's empowerment into tourist development initiatives improves inclusivity and ensures long-term sustainability.



*Source: researcher*

*Description: The charming streets of Muree blanketed in snow, offering a picturesque winter scene.*

## **Barriers Faced by Women and the Community Towards Tourism Development in Muree**

Several studies have identified various barriers that hinder the effective participation of local



communities, particularly women, in tourism development. In the case of Sudhmahadev, Jammu & Kashmir, Dogar and Gupta (2012) revealed that communities face several challenges including limited capacity, the high cost of participation, and the attitudes of professionals towards local involvement. These barriers are like those observed in Muree, a popular hill station in Pakistan, where tourism development has been hindered by socio-economic constraints and lack of community engagement (Ali & Pervez, 2020).

The local population in Muree, like in many other tourist destinations, often finds itself excluded from the decision-making process regarding tourism development. According to a study by Ali (2018), one of the primary barriers is the lack of awareness and education about tourism planning and its potential benefits. As a result, many local women are excluded from the planning and administration of tourism, which reduces their ability to take advantage of its economic benefits. Furthermore, gender-based disparities also play a significant role, as women in Muree face cultural and social constraints that prevent them from participating in tourism-related enterprises such as guiding, hospitality services, and entrepreneurship (Ali & Pervez, 2020).

Economic considerations like the high cost of training associated to tourism and limited access to financial resources provide significant difficulties in addition to these sociocultural barriers. Women are constrained by limited access to financial capital and credit facilities, making it difficult for them to start or expand tourism-related businesses (Tosun, 2000). Moreover, insufficient infrastructure and poor connectivity to remote areas of Muree further limit the ability of local communities, especially women, to engage in tourism-related activities. This lack of infrastructure also hinders the flow of tourists to less-visited areas, thereby limiting opportunities for local businesses to thrive (Tosun, 2006).

As in Sudhmahadev, tourism authorities in Muree often prioritize developed tourist spots over emerging destinations, leaving local communities in less-traveled areas without adequate attention or resources (Ali, 2018). This causes the community's unwillingness to participate in tourist development by creating a lack of confidence between the locals and tourism developers. All things considered, these obstacles must be removed by increasing local involvement, advancing gender equality, offering chances for capacity building, and making sure inclusive development plans are implemented that benefit women and the larger Muree community. By removing these obstacles, the local community would be able to participate fully in and profit from tourist-related activities, promoting a more equitable and sustainable tourism development process.



Source: [Autopodia Foundation](#)

Description: Rural women participating in community-based initiatives aimed at empowerment and education, reflecting efforts to include women in tourism-related development.

## **Problem statement**

Tourism plays a vital role in the growth of any economy. Tourism is a key factor in the growth of the economy and infrastructural development of developing countries. Pakistan offers many attractive tourist sites due to its rich natural beauty and cultural legacy, but as a developing nation, it faces multiple challenges in developing its tourism industry.

Numerous organizations are striving to address issues like poor infrastructure, a lack of suitable facilities, and low awareness that both tourists and local communities must deal with. As a result, the local population must recognize the value of tourism and take an active role in its growth. The role of women in the growth of tourism is an important topic that hasn't gotten much attention. Even though women make up a significant share of the workforce in informal tourism, they are frequently underrepresented in leadership roles, decision-making processes, and financial gains in this industry. Because of cultural barriers, restricted access to resources, and a lack of opportunities for empowerment, women in Murree continue to participate in tourism-related activities at a low level. Improving women's involvement can result in more sustainable tourism development, which benefits their families as well as communities.

This study aims to explore the perceptions and awareness levels of the local community in Murree regarding tourism development, with a specific focus on women's empowerment and their participation in tourism-related decision-making and economic activities. The broad area of this study is "tourism," narrowed down to the topic "The Role of Local Community and Women Empowerment in Tourism Development in Murree."

## **Research Questions**

This research aims to answer the following questions:

What are the perceptions of the local community towards tourism development in Murree?

How do the locals of Murree participate in the tourism development process?

What is the role of women in tourism-related activities in Murree?

What are the barriers and opportunities for enhancing women's participation and leadership in tourism in Murree?

## **Data Collection Methods/Techniques**

A variety of techniques, including surveys, questionnaires, observations, and semi-structured or structured interviews, can be applied to gather data. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from respondents in order to achieve the goals of this study. These techniques are especially useful for investigating topics such as women's empowerment since they provide a clear set of criteria for consistent and comparable data while preserving the ability to record diverse experiences. The semi-structured interview method was used as it allows the researcher to ask predefined questions while also probing deeper into the participants' views and experiences (Cohen, 2006). This strategy is particularly helpful for discussing sensitive topics like women's roles and empowerment in the growth of the tourist industry since it encourages open discussion and provides an opportunity for women to express their challenges and experiences.

Participant observation involves the researcher engaging with individuals in their daily lives to gather data. This approach is very useful for understanding the actual experiences that women have in their communities. By participating in daily activities and observing the dynamics of women's participation in tourism development, the researcher can gather rich, qualitative data that reflects the realities of women's empowerment (Jorgensen, 2015). This method provides a unique

perspective on the social and cultural elements impacting women's participation in the tourist industry, allowing greater understanding of the possibilities and challenges they experience.

## Conclusion

Most of residents of Muree have taken part in the growth of tourism for personal reasons, such as business, hotels, and restaurants. They are convincing and often demand that tourists purchase their products. They haven't, however, taken an active part in promoting culture. Lack of funds to plan events, cultural festivals, and campaigns to promote their culture and tourism are one of their primary challenges. To encourage local culture and tourism, festivals were recently held in different cities of Pakistan which results local community actively involved on it. But in murree there is many cultural and traditional festivals are held like a snow gala in which no participation of locals was involved to organize even they don't advertise Murree's tourism on social media and there aren't any coordinated campaigns against it. Additionally, there aren't enough playgrounds for kids to play outside, so many of them spend their time playing computer games or other non-physical forms of entertainment.

Furthermore, women continue to play a small role in the tourism industry, with little representation in positions of leadership or entrepreneurship. Their participation is restricted by cultural norms, a lack of training, and restricted access to resources. In Murree, empowering local women through tourism initiatives could have a big impact on social inclusion and economic growth.

The empowerment of women plays a crucial role in the sustainable development of tourism in Muree. In Muree, local women are becoming more and more acknowledged as important tourism stakeholders who play a crucial role in cultural preservation as well as contributing to the social and economic fabric. Involving women in tourism-related fields like hospitality, handicraft manufacturing, and cultural tourism benefits the wellbeing of the larger community as well as their own personal empowerment. Women's active involvement in tourism development can promote gender equality, increase local revenue, and help to promote Muree's reputation as a friendly and inclusive travel destination.

However, there are still barriers preventing women from fully participating in Muree's tourism development. Cultural and social norms that limit women's mobility and decision-making involvement, discrimination based on gender, and limited access to capital are some of these barriers. Due to established norms about their duties in the home and society, many women in Muree find it difficult to access possibilities connected to tourism. The necessity of empowering women via education, training, and capacity-building initiatives to increase their involvement in the tourism industry is becoming more apparent despite these barriers. In general, the local community in Muree regards women's participation in tourist development positively as they understand how it may strengthen the local economy, generate opportunities for employment, and provide women more social and financial impact. Women entrepreneurs have found techniques to use tourism to support their financial independence, especially those in the craft and hospitality industry. Additionally, local women are willing to be involved in decision-making, especially when it comes to tourism-related initiatives that will directly benefit them and their families.

## References

- Ali, M. (2018). *Tourism and community participation in Muree: Opportunities and challenges*. Islamabad University Press.
- Ali, M., & Pervez, S. (2020). Challenges of sustainable tourism in Muree: Environmental, economic, and social impacts. *Tourism Review*, 25(4), 321–335. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-12-2019-0420>
- Cohen, L. (2006). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). Routledge.

- Dogar, M. I., & Gupta, A. (2012). Barriers to community participation in tourism development: A case study of Sudhmahadev, Jammu & Kashmir. *International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 1(2), 89–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23013050.2012.698562>
- Jorgensen, J. (2015). The role of participant observation in the study of human behavior and empowerment. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Social Sciences*, 12(3), 244-260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23277493.2015.1077864>
- Rasoolimanesh, S. M. (2016). *Types of community participation in tourism development*. [Details about the publication].
- Statista. (2024). *Global tourism sector market size 2023*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1220218/tourism-industry-market-size-global/>
- The Guardian. (2025, May 5). *From Sri Lanka to Tanzania: the pioneering hotels run entirely by women*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/may/05/from-sri-lanka-to-tanzania-the-pioneering-hotels-run-entirely-by-women>
- Tosun, C. (2000). Limits to community participation in the tourism development process in developing countries. *Tourism Management*, 21(6), 613–633. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(00\)00009-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(00)00009-1)
- Tosun, C. (2006). Expected nature of community participation in tourism development. *Tourism Management*, 27(3), 493–504. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2004.12.004>
- UNWTO. (2019). *Global report on women in tourism – Second edition*. Retrieved from <https://www.unwto.org/publication/global-report-women-tourism-2-edition>
- UNWTO. (2021). *Women take 'centre stage' in tourism development*. Retrieved from <https://www.unwto.org/news/women-take-centre-stage-in-tourism-development>
- UNWTO. (n.d.). *Definition of tourism*. Retrieved from [Insert URL]
- World Travel & Tourism Council. (2024). *Travel & tourism economic impact*. Retrieved from <https://esg.wttc.org/research/economic-impact/moduleid/704/itemid/182/controller/downloadrequest/action/quickdownload>