

doi: 10.52370/TISC22269GM

## **AGROTOURISM IN THE FUNCTION OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT – ILLUSTRATION FROM RURAL AREA OF KOSOVO AND METOHIJA**

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### **Abstract**

*Nowadays, it is very difficult for women in the countryside to achieve their job and become empowered in that field. Agrotourism is a leading opportunity for the wider inclusion of women living in rural areas. The aim of the study is to determine the effect of the position of women and the empowerment of women for stronger involvement in agritourism development, in Sirinić district, Kosovo and Metohija. Also, the aim was to determine the differences in attitudes in relation to age and material status. The results indicate the existence of significant influences for stronger engagement of women in rural areas, as well as differences in attitudes in relation to the surveyed demographic categories. The importance of research is reflected primarily in the encouragement of women for stronger participation in the development of agritourism, as a form of women's entrepreneurship.*

*Key Words: agritourism, women's entrepreneurship, Sirinić district, Kosovo and Metohija*

*JEL classification: R21, Q10, Z32*

### **Introduction**

One of the most widespread forms of tourism today is rural tourism, which includes all forms of tourism and services that take place in rural areas (Cvijanović et al., 2017). Agrotourism also belongs to this group, as a form of tourist product that is placed on the market of a rural agricultural farm,

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and as a rule represents an additional source of income. Through this tourist offer, the hosts get a chance to market their domestic products and create a specific brand. It is known that a large number of rural women face the problem of unemployment, reduced involvement in jobs that contribute to some income (Gajić et al., 2021). Most women in the countryside spend their lives in the house or on their property, caring for their families. A large number of women are not registered in the labor market at all, more precisely they are registered as unemployed. However, women in the countryside have their usual family affairs or are employed in jobs that are usually not recognized but not paid, even though they are very easily measurable and visible jobs. Rural women work mainly on estates belonging to their fathers or husbands, and it is also known that women have a significant contribution to work on these estates (Singhania et al., 2021).

In the survival of their family, through unpaid work, women are quite involved and make a significant factor in that survival. The authors of the paper conducted a field research in six villages belonging to the Sirinić district in Kosovo and Metohija, on a sample of a total of 508 women. Sirinić district is located in Kosovo and Metohija, on an area of 250 km<sup>2</sup> with one urban and fifteen rural settlements. About 13.000, mostly Serbs, live in the mountainous and rural areas of this district. The environment is very attractive for tourists and rich in natural and cultural resources, which further enhances the chance for greater development of agritourism and the development of women's entrepreneurship.

The aim of the research was to determine whether the attitude of women about their position in agritourism and the support of certain organizations can influence the stronger involvement of women in agritourism development. The results confirm that women believe that they can be more strongly engaged in this area and thus contribute to their better position in the countryside. The research emphasizes the activation of rural women, who should be provided with institutional support for economic empowerment, bearing in mind the fact that they are insufficiently recognized and included in the rural development of their communities.

The goal is to make them more economically independent, enable the creation of new jobs, ensure a better quality of life and influence sustainable economic, cultural and social development. Given that there is very little research on this topic, the paper may have a broader practical and theoretical significance in further research on the position of women in

rural areas, as well as their engagement in paid jobs and represent female entrepreneurship. Also, the importance is reflected in the key problems of insufficient involvement of women in the development of agritourism, and thus insufficient development of the municipality, employment problems, poverty reduction, gender equality and developing partnerships for sustainable development. Local development can be encouraged by the development of women's entrepreneurship through the activation of women from the local municipality, and reliance on local agritourism resources. The users of the obtained data can be local authorities, competent authorities, marketing agencies, the business sector, as well as all other entities interested in the position of women in rural areas, and their stronger involvement in the labor market and agritourism development. The study contributes to the practice of equalizing gender differences in agritourism, and spreading the economic definition of women's entrepreneurial success.

### **Literature review**

#### *Agrotourism as a development opportunity*

Agrotourism is part of the offer in rural areas, where hosts have the chance to encourage rural development through activities related to agriculture on their farms, and placing agro products on the tourism market to increase their income (Anđušić et al., 2011). Agrotourism is a form of rural tourism (Wright & Annes, 2014), which includes various types of other activities and recreation (Gajić et al., 2020). Agrotourism is a part of multifunctional agriculture, but also a part of tourism activity, which includes the totality of relations and business related to travel (Calas et al., 2009). This form of tourism is suitable for rural households that want to redirect part of their agricultural production to individual visitors for whom they will prepare food and ready-to-eat products (Quella et al., 2021; Lamie et al., 2021).

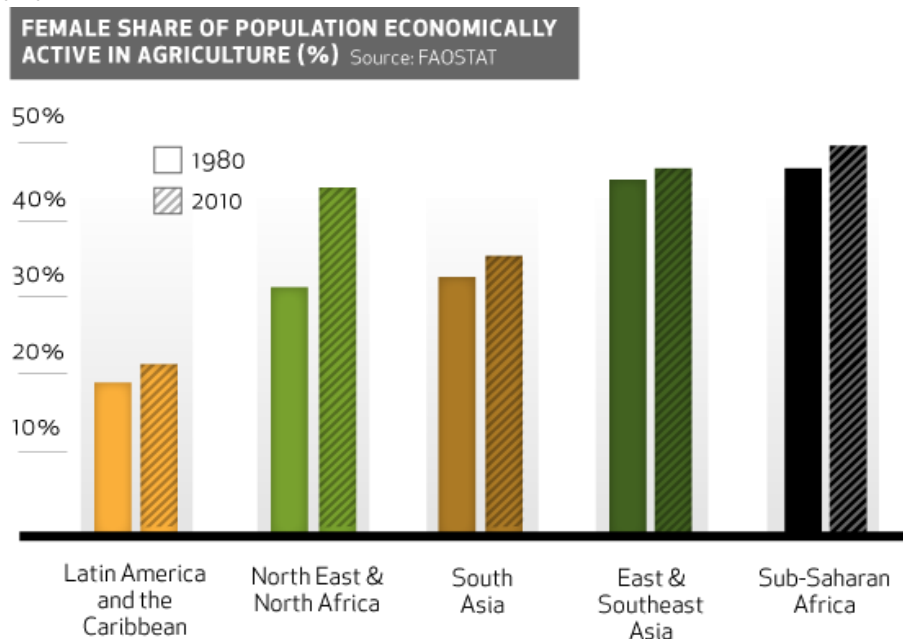
The fact is that agritourism represents a great opportunity to place the resources that this space certainly has at its disposal (Hollas et al., 2021). Also, this type of tourism can potentially represent a path to sustainable development, production of healthy food and its placement on the market (Cvijanović et al., 2020). Agrotourism helps to preserve the development of agricultural activity, but also the development of other activities that will generate additional income for the hosts (Khanal et al., 2020). In order for households to be able to engage in agritourism, they first need to develop an awareness of their potentials or resources that they can offer on the

market (Blažević et al., 2018). These are most often resources that are very attractive and attractive to tourists today, such as specific accommodation capacities of rural interior and exterior, contact with preserved nature, contact with animals, recreation area, physical and mental recovery, then preserved tradition, household warmth, specific gastronomic offer (Kin et al., 2019). Agrotourism is certainly a combination of tourism and agriculture (Maksimović et al., 2015; Li & Barbieri, 2020).

#### *Women in the agritourism sector*

Involving women in the development of agritourism helps rural women to make money in addition to their daily activities by providing additional services to visitors (Pettersson & Casel, 2014). Also, women are able to sell or promote all their home-made products to tourists. Women's entrepreneurship in rural areas is defined as a multidimensional phenomenon that involves activating the female workforce for the benefit of women themselves, but also society as a whole (Arroyo et al., 2019). Women in rural areas represent rurality and agriculture in multiple ways (De Bruin et al., 2006). It spreads tradition and culture, providing products of painting, gastronomy, country life, craft development and other products (Wright & Annes, 2014).

Women in agritourism are less involved than men, but as entrepreneurs, they could identify and look for certain opportunities that can lead to the creation of new goods, services or organizations (Choo & Park, 2020). Agrotourism can provide women and their families with additional income through the use of knowledge about traditional customs, recipes, folk art (Stavroulakis et al., 2013). Women entrepreneurs in the agri-tourism sector often function in the context of adverse circumstances, which relate to their multiple responsibilities at home and at work (Godwyn, 2009; Poulan et al., 2021). The organization of women in manufacturing cooperatives has facilitated their efforts in terms of commitment, mutual support, and pooling of knowledge (Halim et al., 2012). On the other hand, the main obstacles are the lack of management education and insufficient marketing of domestic products (Markatoni et al., 2012).

Figure 1: *Participation of women in agriculture in the world from 1980 to 2010*

Source: *Faostat* (2022)

Although the status of women has improved somewhat due to their additional contribution to family income, conservative stereotypes about their role remain intact in the countryside (Gajić et al., 2021). Women can play a strong role in the development of agritourism, which is likely to increase due to the increasing participation of women in agriculture (McGhee et al., 2007). Numerous examples of women's entrepreneurship point to the link between agricultural and non-agricultural activities within the same farm, where there is a shared use of the same resources (Movono & Dahles, 2017). Agrotourism contributes to four areas of women's empowerment: psychological, social, political and economic (Arroyo et al., 2019). Research has shown that women value and encourage participation in agritourism, because it is a way to generate income, but also to establish greater independence and freedom (McGehee et al., 2007). In rural areas, various social and political barriers hinder the empowerment of women in their inclusion in tourism (Singhania et al., 2021). It has always been marginalized that women can only be part of the family, but very limited in their work, earnings and freedom (Mohanty & Chandran, 2018).

Given all the above in similar research on the inclusion of women in the development of agritourism, the authors started from the key assumption, which is that women's awareness of their involvement in agritourism development and some support can affect women's empowerment. In the development of agrotourism, in the area of Sirinić district, in Kosovo in Metohija, and that the demographic characteristics of age and material status, affect the different attitudes of women towards women's empowerment and position in agrotourism.

## Methodology

### *Data Generation and Sample*

The research was carried out in the area of Sirinić district (a total of six villages: Sevce, Jažince, Štrpce, Gotovuša, Drajkovce, Firaja and Brod), which belongs to Kosovo and Metohija. The field survey was conducted in the period from October to December 2021, data for this study were generated at the end of 2021. A total of 650 questionnaires were distributed, of which 508 were taken due to incomplete answers or missing values.

Figure 2: *Research area Sirinić district*



Source: *Maps for Design (2022)*

The survey was divided into two parts. One involved determining the basic demographic characteristics of research participants. The second part of the questionnaire contained questions, which the respondents answered, rating

them on a scale from 1 to 5 (Likert scale). Two groups of questions were taken in the research: CW (awareness of rural women about their involvement in agritourism): Women are afraid to get involved in work outside the home, Women do not have equality in job opportunities, Women are under pressure to condemn the environment, Women are considered weak for work in agritourism, Women are afraid to change habits, Women feel less valuable, Women do not contribute to the budget, Women are not involved in rural affairs outside the home, Women are afraid to go to training and education; WE (Empowerment of rural women to engage in agritourism development): State projects on women's empowerment, Support to women by local self-government, Organizing trainings for rural women, organizing support for women and awareness raising.

### *Data analysis*

After they collected data, the authors proceeded to data processing and analysis, through the software SPSS AMOS, version 26.00. The method of path analysis was used to determine whether the two factors CW (consciousness of women) and WE (women`s empowerment) can influence a stronger involvement of women in agritourism in the villages of Sirinić district. Path analysis is a continuation of multiple regression analysis. Its aim is to examine the importance and significance of causal relationships between groups of variables. Then, a MANOVA analysis was performed in the SPSS software, version 26.00, in order to determine whether the attitudes and attitudes towards PW and WE differ statistically significantly in relation to demographic characteristics, age and material status. A total of 32.5% of women aged 20 to 34 participated in the study, followed by 43.8% of women aged 35 to 55, and 23.7% of women over 56. Of the total number of respondents, 52.9% have completed secondary school, then 34.5% have completed primary education and only 12.6% have completed college or university. A total of 31.5% of women are employed in cities, but they also work in agriculture.

### **Study Findings**

The data obtained in the model to be presented show that all values are within the range of acceptable values, which indicates an excellent fit of the model, after certain fitting within exclusively the same factors, and in the only acceptable and meaningful way. If the value of RMSEA (Root-mean-square error of approximation - RMSEA) reaches 0.06, we estimate

that the model corresponds to the data. TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index) and CFI (Bentler's Comparative Fit Index) values should be above 0.9, while CMIN / DF (chi-square fit statistics / degree of freedom) values should not reach values above 3. In the study the following model fitting parameters were obtained:  $X^2(\text{Chi-square} - \text{CMIN} / \text{df}) = 2.528$ ,  $\text{df} = 69$ , probability level  $p=0.00$ ; TLI = 0.920; CFI = 0.936; RMSEA =0.068.

Table 1 provides an insight into the factor saturations of all research variables. It is noticed that statistical significance is represented everywhere. The greatest saturation in the first group of questions has the variable CW6 on the factor F1, with the following values: Estimates =1.113, S.E. =0.072, C.R =15.432,  $p=0.00$ . The weakest saturation has item CW1 on factor F1 with values: Estimates =0.5120, S.D =0.060, C.R. = 8.568,  $p=0.00$ .

Table 1: *Factor saturations*

			<b>Estimate</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Label</b>
CW9	<---	F1	1.000				
CW8	<---	F1	0.970	0.080	12.068	***	
CW7	<---	F1	0.827	0.067	12.259	***	
CW6	<---	F1	1.113	0.072	15.432	***	
CW5	<---	F1	0.960	0.069	13.954	***	
CW4	<---	F1	0.780	0.072	10.759	***	
CW3	<---	F1	1.101	0.071	15.491	***	
CW2	<---	F1	0.895	0.074	12.129	***	
CW1	<---	F1	0.510	0.060	8.568	***	
WE1	<---	F2	1.000				
WE2	<---	F2	1.568	0.187	8.383	***	
WE3	<---	F2	1.847	0.206	9.986	***	
WE4	<---	F2	1.968	0.217	9.069	***	
PW	<---	F1	0.002	0.088	0.026	.059	
PW	<---	F2	1.560	0.187	8.321	***	

Source: *Author`s research*

When the second factor is observed, the highest saturation was observed at item WE4 (Estimates = 1,968, S.E. = 0.217, C.R. = 9,069,  $p = 0.00$ ), while the lowest at items WE2 (Estimates = 1,568, S.E. = 0.187, C.R. = 8,383,  $p = 0.00$ ). In general, all items have a very high saturation factor of F2. Both factors significantly show the effect on the output variable PW, within



the limits of statistical significance:  $PW <--- F1$  ( $p = 0.05$ ), and  $PW <--- F2$  ( $p = 0.00$ ).

Table 2 shows the correlation value between factors F1 and F2. It is noticed that the percentage of variance that they share with each other is 31.58%.

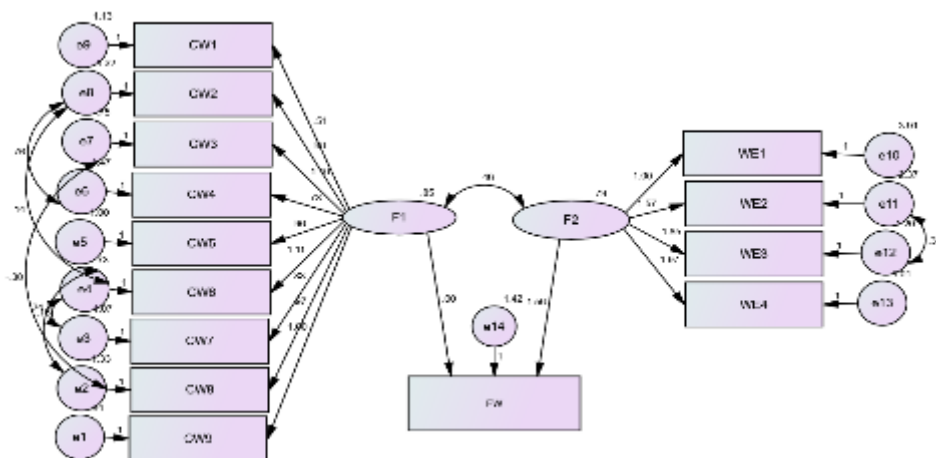
Table 2: *Correlation between factors*

		Estimate	
<b>F1</b>	<b>&lt;--&gt;</b>	<b>F2</b>	0.562

Source: *Author`s research*

Figure 3 presents a trajectory diagram and provides insight into causal relationships. Arrows from one observed variable to another indicate the functional relationships between variables. Factor load (correlation coefficient between each variable, ie the question and the factor itself), is shown on the arrows. Questions of similar content can be linked, in order to get a better fit of the model.

Figure 3: *Path Diagram*

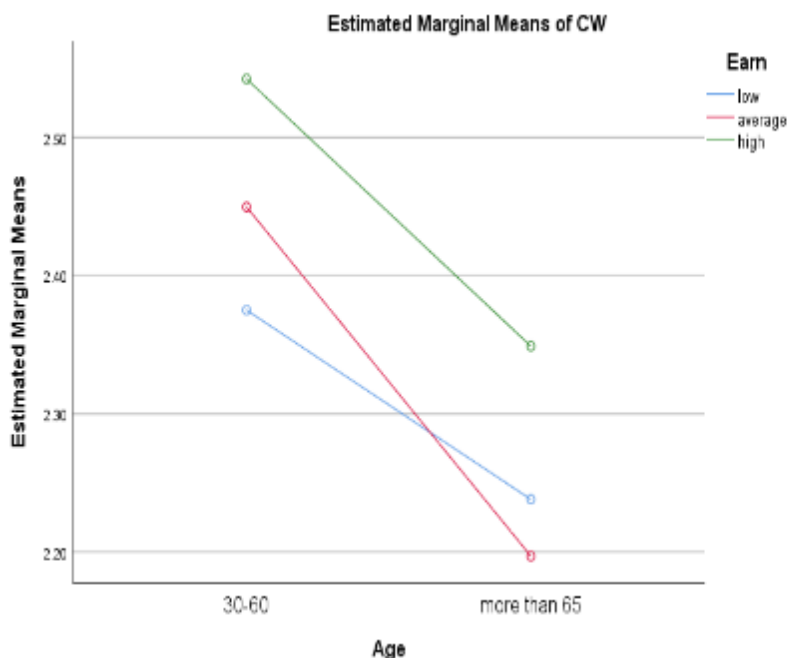


Source: *Author`s research*

The obtained results undoubtedly confirm the initial assumption of the research, which is that the attitude of women about their position and engagement in agrotourism development, as well as support from state and local authorities, have a significant effect on stronger position of women in villages, in agritourism development.

Graph 1 provides an insight into the differences in the answers on the position of women in relation to the categories of age and earnings or material status. It can be noticed that women with high earnings have a more developed awareness of the position of women in agritourism, compared to those with average and low earnings. When looking at the category of age or age, the category of women aged 30 to 60 has a more developed awareness of the position of women in agritourism than older women over 65.

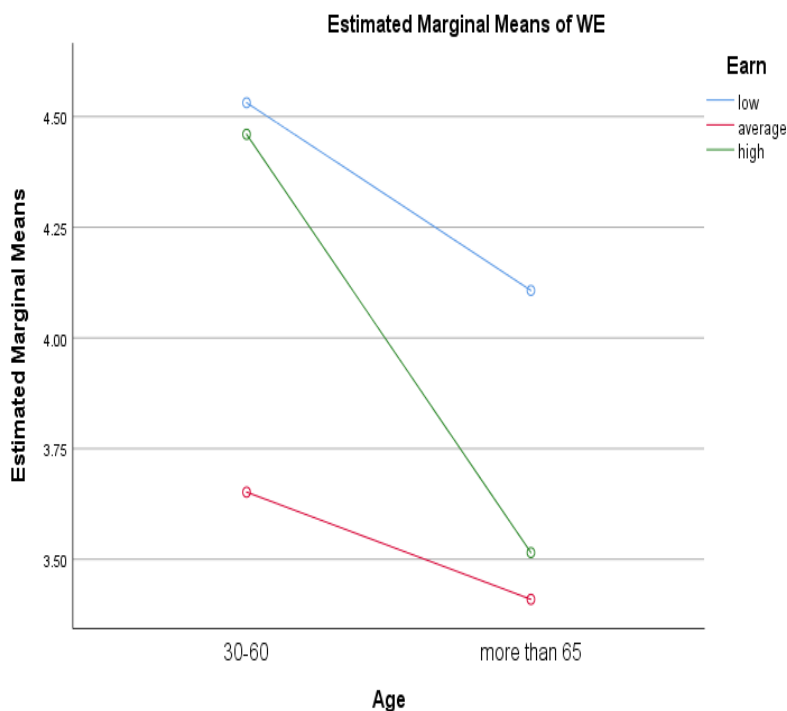
Graph 1: MANOVA analysis results (category CW)



Source: *Author`s research*

Graph 2 shows that women with lower earnings show a sattistic difference in the responses on women's empowerment, and women in the category of women aged 30 to 60 have the same attitude.

Graph 2: MANOVA analysis results (category WE)



Source: *Author`s research*

The assumption has been confirmed that age and material status or earnings affect different perceptions of the position of women and the empowerment of women in agritourism engagement.

### **Conclusion**

The fact is that rural areas and agricultural production and farms are the basis for the development of agritourism. It is certain that for the development of agrotourism, there is a need to connect economic entities and all stakeholders in economic development. The position of women in all rural municipalities of Kosovo and Metohija is not at an enviable level. Women are still in the traditional form of life without deviating from the basic postulates related to family care, and unpaid work on their own family property. The aim of the research was to determine whether the opinion on the position in agrotourism and the empowerment of women by state and local authorities, can affect the stronger involvement of women in the development of agritourism. Authors conducted a survey in six villages in

the Sirinić district of Kosovo and Metohija, on a sample of 508 women. The data were generated at the end of 2021, due to the great difficulties of obtaining answers and cooperating with women in the survey. After the collected data, the analysis was performed through the software SPSS AMOS 26.00, in order to confirm the assumptions of the trajectory analysis. The results indicate that the given afflicts CW (consciousness of women) and WE (women empowerment), significantly affect the variable PW (stronger position of women in agritourism). Also, the obtained results show that the age group from 30 to 60 years significantly evaluates both categories: CW and WE, while those with higher material status evaluate CW more significantly, and those with lower earnings evaluate the WE factor more significantly. The initial assumptions of exploration were confirmed.

Stronger involvement of women in the development of agritourism in the Serbian enclave can increase the importance of women, employment, financial resources, place natural and social resources on the market. Diversification of the entire economy in the countryside can be achieved by strengthening agritourism activities. The research can significantly assess the value of strength and thus indicate the problems faced by women in rural areas. In addition, this research can be part of a broader and more important research, which will help find solutions to encourage and empower women to develop entrepreneurship through agritourism. The development of women's entrepreneurship in agritourism opens the possibility for food products to be placed on the market by selling to visitors. Tourists can be given a complete experience from accommodation and meals on farms, to participation in agricultural work. Of course, financial resources are a great constraint in encouraging women in the countryside to strengthen their entrepreneurship. With this and similar research, it will be possible to point out this problem and try to find a solution in order for women to become active and start a business, and contribute to the overall development of all rural municipalities in the Sirinić district.

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