



Women's Contributions to International Hotels and Tourism Development in Nigeria Since 2000

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Abstract

Women occupy a central position in tourism and hospitality, yet their participation does not consistently translate into leadership, decision-making authority, access to finance, or formal recognition. This manuscript examines women's contributions to international hotels and tourism development in Nigeria since 2000. Drawing on gender and development theory, feminist political economy, and human capital theory, it synthesizes the source document's discussion of women's employment, entrepreneurship, management, cultural promotion, and digital participation. The manuscript argues that the expansion of international hotel chains has created important opportunities for training, employment, and professionalization, while also reproducing structural inequalities through occupational segregation, unequal access to networks and resources, workplace discrimination, and weak gender-disaggregated data. The discussion identifies a persistent gap between women's visibility in operational roles and their influence in executive and policy spaces. It concludes with recommendations for gender-sensitive tourism policy, improved access to finance and skills development, stronger workplace protections, and systematic data collection. Because the submitted source document does not report a primary dataset or fieldwork results, this manuscript is presented transparently as a conceptual and literature-based manuscript rather than an empirical impact evaluation.

Keywords: women; tourism development; international hotels; hospitality; gender equality; Nigeria; women entrepreneurship

1. Introduction

Tourism is the movement of people outside their usual environment for leisure, business, or other purposes, together with the activities and services associated with that movement. The hospitality industry comprises accommodation, food and beverage, events, and related guest services that receive and serve visitors. Together, tourism and hospitality generate employment, facilitate cultural exchange, and contribute to destination development (Baum, 2019; United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2019, 2023). Within this sector, women perform a substantial share of paid and unpaid work, including hotel operations, food and beverage services, travel services, cultural

production, destination promotion, and tourism entrepreneurship. Their participation is therefore not peripheral to tourism development; it is part of the sector's operating infrastructure. However, the presence of women in the workforce does not automatically provide equal access to authority, resources, safety, or leadership (Adeola & Ezenwafor, 2022; UN Women, 2022).

In Nigeria, tourism and hospitality have developed through policy reform, private investment, the expansion of global hotel brands, and increasing attention to tourism as a mechanism for economic



diversification (Akinwale, 2020; Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, 2021). Since 2000, international hotels have created employment and training opportunities while introducing global service standards and new management practices (Baum, 2020; Nwokorie, 2020). Women have participated across these developments, from managerial positions in multinational hotel chains to small and informal enterprises connected to catering, crafts, guiding, accommodation, and cultural tourism. Despite these contributions, the evidence base remains fragmented and women's influence is often less visible than their labour.

This manuscript analyzes the roles and contributions of women to international hotels and tourism development in Nigeria since 2000. It focuses on five connected issues: the forms of women's participation; their contribution to growth and sustainability; the barriers limiting advancement; the influence of international hotel expansion on careers; and strategies for strengthening leadership and inclusion. The central argument is that inclusive tourism development requires a shift from counting women's participation to examining the conditions under which women can exercise influence.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The manuscript uses three complementary perspectives. Gender and development theory directs attention to the social and institutional arrangements that shape access to employment, assets, education, mobility, and decision-making. It helps explain why women may be concentrated in service roles while remaining underrepresented in strategic leadership. Feminist political economy extends this analysis by asking how power and resources are distributed across households, workplaces, markets, and the state. It also makes visible the unpaid care work and informal economic activity that support tourism but are frequently excluded from formal accounts. Gender and development theory directs attention to the social and institutional arrangements that shape access to employment, assets, education, mobility, and decision-making (Scheyvens & Movono, 2020).

Human capital theory emphasizes education, skills, experience, and training as resources that influence employment and progression. In the hotel sector, professional qualifications, digital skills, language competence, managerial experience, and access to professional networks can affect who advances. Used together, these perspectives show that skills matter, but skills alone cannot resolve structural inequalities when recruitment systems, finance, workplace culture, care responsibilities, safety, and policy frameworks remain uneven. (Baum, 2020; Nwokorie, 2020).

Table 1. Key concepts used in the analysis

Concept	Working definition in this article
Women's contributions	Roles, inputs, and impacts through employment, entrepreneurship, management, and cultural promotion.
International hotels	Hospitality establishments operating under global brands or standards and serving domestic and international visitors.
Tourism development	Strategic growth of tourism infrastructure, services, policies, and activities that improve destination value and benefits.
Gender equality	Equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in employment, resources, and decision-making.

Note. Source: Author's synthesis based on Scheyvens (2019), Scheyvens and Movono (2020), and United Nations World Tourism Organization (2019, 2023).

3. Methodological Approach

This manuscript is based on a structured synthesis of the submitted source document and the sources listed in its reference section. The approach is conceptual and literature-based. It organizes the paper's claims around women's roles, constraints, sectoral contributions, hotel expansion, digitalization, and policy responses. No primary interviews, survey responses, administrative dataset,



or longitudinal statistical series were included in the submitted material. Accordingly, the discussion below should be read as an analytical review and agenda for further empirical research, not as a causal estimate of the effect of international hotels on women's employment.

A future empirical version of this manuscript could combine gender-disaggregated employment records, interviews with women hotel workers and entrepreneurs, organizational case studies, and a longitudinal comparison of international hotel expansion across Nigerian destinations. Such a design would help test the mechanisms identified in the conceptual analysis and distinguish sector-wide trends from the experiences of particular firms or regions.

4. Women's Roles in International Hotels and Tourism Development

Women's participation extends across the operational, entrepreneurial, managerial, and cultural dimensions of tourism. In international hotels, women are visible in front-office services, housekeeping, food and beverage operations, customer relations, sales, events, and administration. These roles shape service quality and visitor experience, and they provide the practical labour through which global hotel standards are enacted locally. Women also contribute through supervision and management, where they coordinate staff, maintain service systems, manage guest relations, and translate organizational policies into daily practice. (Okoli & Agu, 2019; Olaoye & Afolabi, 2020).

Beyond formal hotel employment, women contribute to tourism through guest houses, travel agencies, catering, craft production, guiding, cultural performances, food enterprises, and destination-related services. These activities connect tourism demand to local households and communities. They can create income, support household welfare, preserve cultural expression, and strengthen the social infrastructure of destinations. Yet much of this work occurs informally, making it difficult to measure and limiting access to formal credit,

training, procurement opportunities, and government support. (Ezeuduji et al., 2021; Olaoye & Afolabi, 2020).

Digitalization has added another layer to women's participation. Online booking systems, social media marketing, digital payments, and platform-based promotion can reduce dependence on traditional gatekeepers and give women-led enterprises greater visibility (Zhang et al., 2024). Online booking systems, social media marketing, digital payments, and platform-based promotion can reduce dependence on traditional gatekeepers and give women-led enterprises greater visibility. Digital tools may also allow entrepreneurs to reach domestic and international markets more efficiently. However, these gains depend on access to devices, reliable connectivity, digital skills, finance, and safe participation in online markets. Digitalization can widen opportunity, but it does not remove the structural conditions that determine who can use it effectively.

5. Structural Constraints and the Participation-Influence Gap

The most persistent issue identified in the literature is the difference between participation and influence (Adeola & Ezenwafor, 2022; UN Women, 2022). Women may constitute a large share of the hospitality workforce while remaining concentrated in lower-paid or lower-status roles. This occupational pattern limits income, promotion, professional visibility, and access to organizational decision-making. Leadership disparities matter not only for individual careers but also for the kinds of policies, workplace practices, and innovation priorities that organizations adopt.

Access to finance is a second constraint (International Labour Organization, 2020; World Bank, 2020). Women entrepreneurs in tourism may encounter difficulty securing credit, meeting collateral requirements, navigating formal institutions, or obtaining sustained business development support. The result is often undercapitalized enterprises with limited capacity to expand, formalize, hire, or invest in technology.



Financial barriers intersect with social expectations and unequal ownership of assets, making entrepreneurship a site where gender inequality is reproduced even when women are active in the market.

Socio-cultural expectations can further restrict mobility, working hours, career choices, and interaction with visitors. These pressures are especially relevant in hospitality, where work may involve travel, late shifts, relocation, or sustained public-facing engagement. Workplace discrimination, unequal pay, sexual harassment, inadequate maternity support, and exclusion from professional networks can reduce retention and discourage women from pursuing long-term careers. The lack of gender-sensitive policy and reliable gender-disaggregated data compounds these challenges by making women's needs less visible in planning and evaluation. (UN Women, 2022; World Economic Forum, 2022).

6. International Hotel Expansion Since 2000

The expansion of international hotel chains has produced a mixed landscape of opportunity and constraint (Baum, 2019, 2020; Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, 2021). On the opportunity side, global brands can create formal jobs, standardized training, professional pathways, and exposure to international practices. They may also support the professionalization of hospitality by increasing demand for qualifications, service expertise, digital systems, and managerial competence. For women who can access these pathways, international hotels may provide a platform for mobility and leadership development.

At the same time, the expansion of international hotels can intensify competition and make advancement dependent on qualifications, international exposure, professional networks, and organizational cultures that are not equally accessible. Women may enter the sector in substantial numbers but find the path to senior management narrower. The relevant policy question is therefore not simply whether hotel expansion creates jobs, but whether the jobs are decent, safe,

developmental, and connected to decision-making power.

Table 2. Analytical timeline

Period	Sectoral development	Gender implication
2000–2005	Expansion of international hotel operations and new service roles.	More entry points into employment, but early concentration in operational positions.
2006–2015	Professionalization through global standards, training, and hospitality education.	Skills pathways expand while leadership and network gaps remain.
2016–present	Growth of digital promotion, online booking, and platform-based enterprise.	Women-led businesses gain visibility, subject to digital and financial access.

Note. Source: Author's analytical synthesis based on Federal Ministry of Information and Culture (2021), United Nations World Tourism Organization (2019, 2023), and Zhang et al. (2024).

7. Discussion

The analysis suggests that women are not simply beneficiaries of tourism development; they are co-producers of the sector. Their work sustains hotel operations, connects visitors to local culture, and supports enterprise at community level. This contribution has economic and social dimensions. It can generate income, strengthen household welfare, support employment, and preserve cultural resources. Nevertheless, the benefits of participation remain uneven when women lack the authority and assets required to influence the direction of tourism development. (Scheyvens, 2019; United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2023).



The central tension is therefore institutional. The problem is not a lack of women's contribution, but a mismatch between contribution and recognition. When women's informal work is excluded from data, their economic role is underestimated. When women are concentrated in service roles without promotion pathways, their skills and experience are underused. When policy does not address safety, care, finance, and leadership, tourism growth can reproduce the same inequalities it is expected to reduce. The manuscript consequently treats gender equality as a condition of sustainable tourism development rather than as an optional social add-on. (Adeola & Ezenwafor, 2022; International Labour Organization, 2022).

8. Recommendations

- Embed gender-sensitive targets, budgets, and accountability mechanisms in national and destination tourism planning.
- Expand access to finance, credit guarantees, procurement opportunities, and business support for women-led tourism enterprises.
- Create clear hotel-sector pathways into supervision and executive management through mentoring, sponsorship, paid training, and transparent promotion criteria.
- Invest in hospitality education, digital marketing, entrepreneurship, and leadership skills, with particular attention to rural and underserved communities.
- Strengthen workplace protections through anti-harassment systems, equal-pay monitoring, maternity support, safe scheduling, and confidential reporting channels.
- Collect and publish gender-disaggregated data covering formal employment, leadership, pay,

entrepreneurship, and informal tourism participation.

- Build partnerships among government, hotel operators, educational institutions, development agencies, and women's business networks.

9. Conclusion

Women have made significant contributions to international hotels and tourism development in Nigeria since 2000 through employment, management, entrepreneurship, cultural promotion, and digital enterprise. International hotel expansion has created meaningful opportunities for professionalization and economic participation, but these opportunities have not eliminated unequal access to leadership, finance, safety, networks, or recognition. The key shift required is from visibility to influence: from acknowledging that women are present to ensuring that they can shape organizational priorities, tourism policy, and destination futures. Future research should test this argument through longitudinal, gender-disaggregated, and regionally diverse evidence.

Declaration of Scope and Transparency

This conceptual manuscript is based on a structured synthesis of the submitted source document and the works listed in its reference list. It does not report primary interviews, survey data, administrative records, fieldwork, or statistical results. The manuscript therefore makes conceptual and literature-based claims rather than causal or empirical impact estimates. Before submission, the authors will confirm the author details, verify each reference, select the target journal, follow that journal's author guidelines, and add approved methods, results, and ethics information if primary empirical evidence is incorporated.



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