

## **5. Gender and Work in Asia's Tourism Economies**

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Gender and work have become an important research area in tourism studies. Tourism may provide new livelihood options and economic opportunities for women. A growing number of institutions and scholars suggest that through tourism-related work, women participate in economic activities and gain various degrees of empowerment and independence. However, gender is a system of cultural identities and relationships characterized by unequal power and resource distribution between females and males. While women make up the majority of the labor force in the tourism and hospitality industry, women's work and businesses often has remained precarious. Women are more likely than men to be found in lower paid or lesser skilled jobs and more often face discrimination, occupational segregation or stereotyping. Small-scale entrepreneurship and flexible/informal employment in the tourism economy expose women to greater risks of market uncertainty and various types of exploitation. Moreover, an increasing number of men have participated in tourism-related work, including 'feminized' work that requires the embodiment of traits generally considered and reconstructed as feminine: friendliness, hospitable, servility, care, and attentiveness. This panel seeks to explore the impact and interrelatedness of tourism / hospitality work and gender relations in an Asian context. How has women's and men's work in tourism and hospitality businesses reproduced and/or transformed gender relations and practices? What is the role of different stakeholders including hosts, guests, private sector, governmental institutions or NGOs in producing or contesting power and gender imbalances in tourism? How does gender intersect with class, ethnicity and/ or migration status in shaping conditions and consequences of working in the tourism economy?