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Gender in Irish tourism employment

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with some of the gender dimensions of the Irish tourism industry. A brief outline of the industry and its recent development is presented initially. In the absence of data on the gender characteristics of tourists themselves, the chapter focuses on those working in the tourism industry in Ireland, set in the context of the position of women in the Irish workforce in general. A number of aspects of employment in tourism, including skill levels, part-time and seasonal work, segmentation, flexibility and trade union membership are examined from a gender perspective. There follows a case study of the nature of employment in the bed and breakfast business. The chapter concludes with some observations on the implications for economic development in Ireland of the strong emphasis currently being placed on tourism by the Irish government.

TOURISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Traditionally, the Republic of Ireland was heavily dependent on its agricultural sector, which accounted for over three-fifths of all employment at the time independence from the United Kingdom was achieved in 1922. Continued out-migration from agriculture allied to an energetic programme of industrialisation (especially after 1960) produced a sharp reduction in the farm sector's share of the workforce and a corresponding growth in the share of manufacturing and, in particular, urban-based services. However, recurring recession and growing levels of unemployment in the 1980s spurred the government to seek out new areas for economic development. In particular, tourism was targeted as a key vehicle for economic growth owing to its strong performance in the international economy.

One dimension of this, an 'Operational Programme' for tourism, was devised for the period 1989-93 with substantial financial support from the structural funds of the European Community (Ó Cinnéide and Walsh, 1991). This programme provided for a total investment in the tourism sector of some IRE300 millions over the period of the plan. The programme envisaged a doubling of incoming tourist numbers to 4.2 million, an increase in tourism revenues of IRE500 millions (about 75 per cent), and the creation of 25,000 additional tourism-related jobs (an increase of one-third). These were very ambitious targets, given that global tourism had been growing at an average rate of only five per cent in recent years (Henry, 1992).

The first two years of the Operational Programme *did* produce vigorous growth in tourist numbers and revenue, and particularly in investment (Tansey Webster and Associates, 1991; Dunne, 1992). However, there was a slight decline in numbers in 1991, due principally to a slump in the North American market (attributed mainly to the impact of the Gulf War), although aggregate revenue continued to expand.

Overall, tourism (domestic and overseas) accounted for about seven per cent of both GNP and total employment in Ireland in 1990. However, in the period 1985-90, tourism contributed 37 per cent of the net employment growth in the economy (Tansey Webster and Associates, 1991). Tourism also makes a very important contribution to the Irish balance of payments, accounting

for seven per cent of total exports of goods and services in 1990 (Central Statistics Office, 1991b), and, perhaps more importantly, over half the overall net current account surplus in that year (Tansey Webster and Associates, 1991).

Great Britain has always been by far the most important source area of overseas tourists visiting Ireland; in this context, the 'ethnic market' consisting of Irish emigrants and their descendants has been of paramount importance. However, over the last thirty years, while the British market has continued to grow in absolute terms, its share of the overall market has shrunk, as other source areas have grown even more rapidly (Table 3.1). Up to the late 1970s, the North American market was the main growth area, with the ethnic market again being of key importance in this case. However, since then, the most rapid growth has come from Continental Europe, which now accounts for one-quarter of the total, compared with 58 per cent for Great Britain and 14 per cent for North America.

The proportionate shares of total tourist numbers accounted for by the different source areas are not matched by their shares of revenue generated. In 1990, Great Britain accounted for only just over 40 per cent of revenue (compared with 58 per cent of visitors), due mainly to the fact that visitors from this source tend to stay with relatives and friends rather than in commercial accommodation. Continental Europe contributed one-third of total revenue and North America one-fifth. Northern Ireland is not included in Table 3.1 as it is treated separately in the accounts published by Bord Fáilte (the Irish Tourist Board): in

Table 3.1 Trends in overseas tourism to the Republic of Ireland, 1960-90

Source area	1960		1970		1980		1990	
	No. ('000)	%	No. ('000)	%	No. ('000)	%	No. ('000)	%
Great Britain	827	87.9	1,061	72.7	1,068	61.7	1,785	57.7
North America	69	7.3	258	17.7	260	15.0	443	14.3
Continental Europe	25	2.7	110	7.5	336	19.4	744	24.0
Other	20	2.1	30	2.1	67	3.9	124	4.0
Total	941	100.0	1,459	100.0	1,731	100.0	3,096	100.0

Source: Bord Fáilte, various.

1990, it accounted for 16 per cent of all out-of-state tourists, but just 8 per cent of tourism revenue (Bord Fáilte, 1991).

Visiting relatives and friends remains the single most important reason for tourists to come to Ireland: in 1990, 46 per cent of surveyed overseas visitors gave this as the purpose of their visit. Another 19 per cent came to Ireland for business purposes (business travel being included in Ireland's tourism accounts). For those coming to Ireland purely on holiday, the Department of Tourism and Transport has identified the main attractions as being an attractive physical environment conducive to a wide range of recreational and leisure pursuits, the friendliness of the people, a strong folk and cultural tradition, and a distinctive archaeological heritage (Ó Cinnéide and Walsh, 1991).

Irish tourism has an important regional dimension, in that tourists are attracted disproportionately to the more rural and remote western part of the country, where incomes are generally below the national average (Table 3.2). Table 3.2 shows that the western regions, with below-average incomes, attract above-average levels of tourism revenue, with the result that tourism makes a much greater contribution to personal incomes in these regions than it does in other regions.

Given the emphasis being placed by the Irish government on tourism as a means of income and employment expansion, and the resultant growing importance of the industry in the national

Table 3.2 Regional distribution of income from tourism in the Republic of Ireland, 1990

Region	Share of tourism income (%)	Share of population (%)	Per capita income index*	Tourism revenue as % of total personal income
East	29.8	40.9	112	3.7
Midlands	7.2	10.2	86	4.7
South-east	9.6	10.9	90	5.6
South-west	22.1	15.1	99	8.4
Mid-west	9.7	8.8	95	6.6
West	12.8	8.3	87	10.1
North-west	8.7	5.9	85	9.9

Sources: Central Statistics Office (1991a); Tansey Webster and Associates (1991).

* Ireland = 100

economy, there has been a surprising dearth of critical analysis of the implications of tourism development. Such literature as has been generated by the academic and consultant communities has tended to focus on such topics as overseas marketing strategies, the organisation of the tourism industry, and future investment needs (e.g. Price Waterhouse, 1987; Quinn, 1989). Such issues as the nature of the employment provided by the tourism industry and the social, cultural and environmental impacts of tourism development have been largely ignored (but see Deegan and Dineen, 1991), despite the emergence of a substantial literature on these issues elsewhere (Henry, 1992). In particular, tourism has managed, thus far, to escape the growing concern with gender issues which has developed in Ireland in recent years. This chapter seeks to rectify this situation by exploring in some detail the gender dimensions of the way in which the Irish tourism industry operates. Two such dimensions immediately offer themselves for consideration: first, the gender characteristics of tourists themselves and, secondly, the gender characteristics of those providing the tourism 'product'. Each of these is considered in turn.

GENDER CHARACTERISTICS OF TOURISTS

Scott and Godley (1992) have posed the question: 'Are leisure worlds generally segmented along the lines of gender identification?' This seems an obvious question, yet one which appears to have been largely – if not entirely – ignored in the extensive literature on segmentation in tourism marketing. Thus Quinn (1989, pp. 126–7), for example, in reviewing tourism marketing, states that:

The most frequently used market segmentation criteria fall into either of two categories: socio-economic, e.g. based on income level, age grouping, educational standard, occupation, family size, etc.; or product-related, based on the type of product purchased, the frequency of purchase, etc.

While gender may well be subsumed under the catch-all 'etc.' at the end of this list, it clearly did not present itself to the writer as a criterion of particular importance.

Similarly, a recent paper by Bord Fáilte's senior market research executive argues that a successful marketing strategy must address market segmentation by 'visitor type, socio-demographics and life-style' (Maher, 1992, p. 5.1). The paper then presents information on a number of tourist surveys which break down tourists by region of origin, education, age, income level, family demographic structure, and social class, but with no mention at all of gender. This despite the fact that Bord Fáilte *does* normally include a question on gender identification in its tourist surveys.

Conventionally, gender studies argue that, where no allowance is made for gender differences in social research, this is because of a gender bias which subsumes female behaviour into that of the dominant male pattern. However, in the case of tourism, it may be that the underlying assumption is that tourists travel as couples or family groups with shared aspirations and objectives. But, as highlighted in a feature article in the *Irish Times* (20 April, 1992), conflict rather than unity of purpose is quite common on family holidays. Indeed, one psychiatrist quoted in this feature regarded family holidays as a common cause of marriage breakdown, with disagreements over preferred activities being an important contributory factor.

In the absence, therefore, of appropriate survey data on the gender dimension of tourist behaviour, it is impossible to carry our exploration of this dimension further, except to argue that there is a clear need to incorporate gender differences into tourism marketing research and to develop marketing and service strategies with a view to catering specifically for such differences.

WOMEN IN THE IRISH LABOUR FORCE

There is, by contrast, a considerable volume of information concerning the role of women in Irish tourism employment. However, in order to place our examination of this information in context, it is appropriate to review, initially, the role of women in the Irish labour force in general.

The modernisation of the Irish economy and of Irish society in the twentieth century has not, as elsewhere, been accompanied by a sharp rise in female participation in the paid labour force. In

1987, Ireland's female labour force participation rate (the proportion of the female population aged 15-64 in the labour force) was the lowest of the 22 OECD countries, at 37.5 per cent (in the majority of cases the rate was above 50 per cent, and exceeded 70 per cent in the case of the four Nordic countries). There was only a marginal increase in the rate over the previous 20 years, during which time Ireland was surpassed by Italy, Spain, Greece, and Portugal (Callender, 1990). This low participation rate means that women comprise a relatively small proportion of the total labour force (30.9 per cent in 1987, up from just a quarter in 1971).

To a significant extent, the low level of involvement by Irish women in paid labour may be attributed to a lack of labour market pressures, in that the Irish economy has portrayed a chronic historical inability to provide adequate employment for its population. This is reflected in high levels of emigration (since independence was achieved in 1922, over one million people have emigrated from a country which, in 1991, had a total population of just 3.5 million) and, more recently, very high unemployment levels (currently of the order of 20 per cent).

More importantly, in the past Irish women have been excluded from the labour force by a range of legislative measures, including a discriminatory social welfare system and obligatory retirement on marriage for female public servants. However, a series of laws establishing formal equality for women workers was enacted in the 1970s (arising directly from EC membership in 1973), while equality of treatment under the social welfare code was gradually extended in the 1980s. The slow growth in women's employment in response to these measures has been due partly to prolonged recession since the early 1980s and high levels of income tax, even for those on low pay. At the same time, it is clear that many women remain outside the paid workforce due to traditional social and cultural value systems, strongly championed by the Irish Roman Catholic church, which emphasises a family-centred role for Irish women (O'Dowd, 1987). This is classically reflected in the Irish constitution, enacted in 1937, which specifically states that the place of women is in the home and seeks to 'ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home' (*Constitution of Ireland*, nd, p. 138).

Predictably, those women who are engaged in paid work are heavily concentrated in the services sector, which accounted for 77 per cent of all women workers in 1987, compared with 57 per cent of total employment (Blackwell, 1989). Women account for 44 per cent of service workers compared with just one-third of all paid workers. Women represent 30 per cent of manufacturing workers, a proportion that has been growing slowly, albeit due mainly to contraction in male employment in the sector. While women have figured prominently in the branch plants of foreign (mainly electronics) firms which have been a central element in national industrial policy since 1960, employment growth in this sector has been largely offset by secular decline in the textiles and clothing industries, where female manufacturing employment was traditionally concentrated (Breathnach, 1993).

In the services sector, women are particularly strongly represented in personal services (mainly hotels and restaurants), professional services (teaching and nursing), financial and business services, and the lower echelons of the civil service. They are poorly represented in wholesale distribution, transportation, and the security forces. This, of course, is typical of advanced economies.

As elsewhere, the labour market options available to Irish women are greatly circumscribed by the stereotyping of an educational system which steers women away from technical and skilled manual occupations and towards a narrow range of service occupations. This bias is, of course, further enhanced by the predispositions of recruiting agents. The resultant constriction of employment opportunities inevitably means that many Irish women must either accept poorly paid unskilled work or opt out of the workforce altogether.

Although, at 7.1 per cent of the total workforce in 1987, part-time employment in Ireland is less common than in other advanced economies (Dineen, 1989), it is, as elsewhere, dominated by women workers (70 per cent of the total). Part-time work frequently suits married women (who make up one-half of all part-time workers) in particular; thus, survey evidence shows that the majority of Irish part-time workers opt voluntarily for this form of employment (Dineen, 1989), although the level of involuntary part-time work is growing.

Women also constitute a majority (55 per cent) of temporary workers, who make up 8.5 per cent of the overall Irish workforce. However, in this case the great – and growing – majority are in temporary employment because of an inability to find permanent jobs (although older women in particular are more inclined to opt for temporary work by choice). Particular reference has been made here to both part-time and temporary employment, not only because of the fact that they are dominated by women workers, but also – as shall be seen – because of their significance in the tourism industry.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN IRISH TOURISM

Because of its highly heterogeneous nature and the fact that it overlaps with many other economic activities, tourism employment is not easily quantifiable. However, in the case of Ireland, detailed surveys carried out by the Council for Education, Recruitment and Training (CERT), the national tourism training agency, provide an excellent database for analysing the structure of employment in the industry (CERT, 1987, 1988, 1991).*

In 1987, an estimated 57,000 people were engaged directly in providing tourism services; however, because many of these were employed part-time, or were simultaneously providing services to non-tourists (retailing, catering, etc.), this figure converts to 38,500 full-time equivalents (CERT, 1987). This figure accords well with other estimates of employment in the industry (Tansey Webster and Associates, 1991). When one includes indirect employment (supplying goods and services to the industry) and further employment induced by the multiplier effects of tourist expenditure, total tourism-related employment for that year rises to 63,000, representing about 6 per cent of total employment and 10 per cent of service employment.

Table 3.3 gives a breakdown of tourism employment by sub-sector and gender. While the CERT surveys provide much detail on the gender division of labour in most areas of tourism employment, it is not complete. It has therefore been necessary to estimate the gender division for some sub-sectors from other sources. The proportions given in the table therefore should be regarded as roughly approximate rather than precise.

Table 3.3 *Employment structure of the Irish tourism industry, 1987¹*

Sub-sector	As % of total employment	Women as % of sub-sector
Accommodation	49	70
Catering	11	38
Transport	16	18 ²
Tour operators	6	76
Administration ³	5	44 ⁴
Leisure/recreation	6	50
Retailing	8 ⁵	40 ⁶
Total	100	54

Notes:

- 1 Unless otherwise stated, all data derived from CERT (1987).
 - 2 Based on national gender division for transport sector (Blackwell, 1989).
 - 3 Refers to public servants involved in tourism administration.
 - 4 Based on overall gender division in civil service (Blackwell, 1989).
 - 5 Refers to full-time equivalents.
 - 6 Based on national gender division in retailing (Blackwell, 1989).
- All figures are rounded.

Table 3.3 shows that, in 1987, women accounted for some 54 per cent of all those employed in Irish tourism. This is significantly in excess of the proportion of women in services generally (44 per cent), and almost twice the proportion of women in the overall workforce (31 per cent). If one excludes the male-intensive transport sub-sector (mainly involved in bringing tourists into the country), women account for 60 per cent of tourism employment. For accommodation, which accounts for one-half of tourism employment, the proportion rises to 70 per cent.

Women's employment in the hotel sector

It is clear, therefore, that tourism is an atypical sector in the Irish economy, in that it is characterised by a predominantly female workforce. In order to explain this, a closer examination will be carried out of the accommodation sub-sector, in which women workers are particularly prominent. This examination is based on a detailed survey carried out by CERT (1988) of employment in hotels and guesthouses (hereafter simply the 'hotel sector'), which account for the great bulk of employment in the sub-

Table 3.4 Structure of employment in the Irish hotel sector, 1988

Employment category	As % of all employment	Women as % of category
Full-time permanent	52.1	59.2
Part-time permanent	12.5	79.4
Full-time seasonal	13.6	73.5
Part-time seasonal	2.4	88.2
Casual	19.4	n/a
Total	100.0	66.0*

Sources: CERT (1988); authors' additional calculations.

* Excluding casual.

sector. The hotel sector is particularly oriented to the tourism industry, with 80 per cent of employment being tourism-related (CERT, 1987).

Table 3.4 provides a breakdown of employment in the hotel sector into different employment categories, and gives the female proportion of employment in each category. Just over one-half of all employment is full-time permanent, with a further one-eighth being permanent but part-time. The remaining one-third of jobs are seasonal (both full-time and part-time) or casual.

Excluding casual workers (for whom no gender breakdown is available) women comprise two-thirds of all employment in hotels – over twice the overall female participation rate in paid employment in the country. However, the female proportion is lower for full-time permanent jobs (59 per cent) and higher for all the other categories: part-time permanent (79 per cent); full-time seasonal (74 per cent); and part-time seasonal (88 per cent). This employment structure is very similar to that noted by Baguley (1990) for the British hotel and catering sector.

The domination of part-time and temporary employment by women is, as noted previously, a common feature of advanced Western economies. The fact that these employment categories constitute such a large proportion of total employment in the hotel sector – almost a half compared to just 16 per cent in the national workforce – therefore goes a long way to explaining the disproportionate representation of women workers in the sector. However, the fact remains that women are also disproportionately represented among full-time permanent workers in the sector.

The second key explanatory factor in accounting for the high level of female employment in the hotel sector is the low level of skill required of the sector's workforce: less than one-third of all workers may be regarded as skilled in the sense of having received at least some formal training. Even among full-time permanent workers, only a minority (44 per cent) have any formal training. Skill levels are particularly low (only one-seventh of all workers having had formal training) among part-time, seasonal and casual workers, the great majority of whom are women.

In all work categories, men are more likely to be skilled than women; and the higher the skill level of an occupational category, the more likely it is that it is full-time, permanent and male. Of managerial positions (eight per cent of all employment in the sector), 90 per cent are full-time permanent and three-quarters are formally trained, but only 40 per cent are held by women. By contrast, less than half (44 per cent) of unskilled 'accommodation assistants' (chamber maids) (nine per cent of all jobs) are full-time permanent, and all are women. Similarly, over 90 per cent of waiters/waitresses (21 per cent of all hotel employment) are women, and less than 30 per cent of jobs in this category are full-time permanent.

Gender segmentation in the hotel sector

There is considerable variation in female representation as between the different 'departments' of the hotel sector. Women are particularly prominent in the accommodation (99 per cent of all workers) and restaurant and banquet (86 per cent) departments, but only comprise a minority in management (40 per cent) and the bar and nightclub (48 per cent) departments. The remaining departments, kitchen (61 per cent) and reception and general (57 per cent) occupy intermediate positions.

Within departments, there is also a high level of gender segmentation by occupation. Of kitchen staff, the vast majority of head chefs (skilled) and porters (unskilled) are men, while almost all kitchen assistants and wash-ups (both unskilled) are women. While restaurant and banquet staff are predominantly female, head waiters/waitresses are mainly men. In the reception and general department, those working as receptionists or in accounts

are almost entirely women, while porters, doorpersons and maintenance workers are almost all male. In management, of 161 managing directors and general managers, only one is a woman.

However, there are some occupational categories where segmentation is not so apparent. Almost one-half of chefs (other than head chefs) and barpersons are women (although in the latter case, women are much less likely to be full-time permanent). And, while there are virtually no female managing directors or general managers, of those with the simple grade of 'manager', 44 per cent are women, with the proportion rising to 49 per cent for assistant/duty managers and exactly one-half for trainee managers. This could mean improving opportunities for women to progress to top management positions in future years. Alternatively, it could simply mean that women gradually get squeezed out as they move up the managerial ladder. Hicks' (1990) findings would tend to support the latter interpretation.

Flexibility in hotel employment

While much attention has been devoted in recent times to growing (imposed) flexibility of the workforce (especially in the manufacturing sector) in advanced economies (Atkinson, 1985; Gertler, 1988; Schoenberger, 1988), labour flexibility is a long-established feature of the hotel sector. In Britain, while functional flexibility emerged in the 1960s in response to labour shortages, it tended to be superseded in the 1970s by increasing numerical flexibility, mainly in the form of part-time and seasonal work (Bagguley, 1990). While part-time work is more conducive to functional specialisation than flexibility, it has many attractions for employers. These include the ability to adapt to daily and weekly fluctuations in customer demand and the ability to avoid social insurance contributions, holiday and sick pay, etc., for part-time workers. The fact that part-time and temporary workers are more difficult to organise by trade unions is also seen as beneficial by many employers. There is also the fact, noted earlier, that part-time and seasonal work is also attractive in particular to many women (especially married) workers.

According to Bagguley (1990), in Britain, functional flexibility is particularly common among management staff in full-time

jobs. In Ireland, CERT (1988) found a very high – and growing – level of functional flexibility outside management grades, with 73 per cent of hotels and 88 per cent of guesthouses reporting flexible practices in non-management grades. The main area of functional flexibility involves movement between bar, restaurant and receptionist work. As the latter two categories are overwhelmingly female in content, it can be concluded that most functionally flexible workers in the hotel sector are women. The same applies, of course, to numerically flexible workers.

CERT (1988) also found that functional flexibility is particularly concentrated among non-Grade A hotels. To a certain extent this is due to greater scope for functional specialisation in the larger Grade A establishments. However, it is also noteworthy that trade unions are strongly established in the Grade A sector, but are almost entirely absent from the lower hotel grades. Irish hotel workers are mainly organised by the Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU), the dominant union for general workers. SIPTU has negotiation agreements with 54 Grade A hotels representing three-quarters of all rooms in the Grade A sector (SIPTU, 1991). However, less than half the hotel rooms in Ireland are of Grade A standard, and trade unions are almost entirely absent from the other grades, where functional and numerical flexibility are particularly prominent.

Regional distribution of hotel employment

CERT (1988) also provides information on the regional distribution of hotel employment. Table 3.5 relates each region's share of hotel employment to its share of total employment. A ratio of greater than one in the right-hand column indicates a disproportionate concentration of hotel employment in a region. The table shows that hotel employment is particularly strongly concentrated in the western half of the country. This corroborates the findings by Tansey Webster and Associates (1991), noted earlier, that tourism makes a disproportionate contribution to personal incomes in western regions. This is undoubtedly significant, in that these are the most underdeveloped regions in the country, with below-average incomes and inferior employment oppor-

Table 3.5 Regional distribution of Irish hotel employment, 1988

Region	% of Irish total		
	Hotel employment (1988)	Total employment (1986)	Ratio
East	29.0	43.7	0.66
Midlands	5.5	8.8	0.62
South-east	10.9	10.4	1.05
South-west	21.8	14.7	1.48
Mid-west	11.4	8.9	1.28
West	12.1	8.1	1.50
North-west	9.4	5.4	1.74

Sources: CERT (1988); Central Statistics Office (1989).

tunities compared with the east of the country. Of particular relevance in this context is the fact that, in the past, employment opportunities for women tended to be relatively poorer for women in the west (Gillmor, 1985). Tourism, with its disproportionate tendency to provide work for women, therefore contributes in an important way to expanding work opportunities for the female labour force in this part of the country.

On the other hand, given the unskilled and frequently part-time or seasonal nature of employment in the hotel sector, it is clear that the disproportionate concentration of this employment in the west does not augur well for the prospects of closing the average income gap with the east, where high-quality service employment is heavily concentrated. Hotel employment, therefore, does provide a considerable level of employment in areas where job opportunities of any kind are in short supply, but at the cost of exacerbating inter-regional income disparities.

Women's employment in other tourism sectors

CERT (1991) provides detailed information on employment in a wide range of tourist-related activities outside the accommodation, catering and access transport sectors. Most of the activities in question (referred to hereinafter as the 'miscellaneous tourism' sector) relate to leisure and recreation, but some other

activities, such as internal transport and other tourist support services, are included. In employment terms, the most important activities involved are golf, craft centres, car hire, language centres and historic houses. Most of these activities also cater for non-tourists (such as golf, theatres), so that not all the jobs involved can be attributed to tourism. However, from CERT (1987) we can estimate that around 60 per cent of the employment concerned is tourism-dependent. This in turn amounts to almost 20 per cent of all direct employment in tourism in Ireland in 1990.

Data on the gender make-up of employment is available for sub-sectors accounting for three-quarters of all employment in the miscellaneous tourism sector. It is from these sub-sectors that Table 3.6 has been compiled. A comparison between Tables 3.4 and 3.6 shows that the nature of employment in the miscellaneous tourism sector is rather similar to that in the hotel sector. CERT (1991) does not provide for a 'casual' employment sector, but a comparison of the two tables suggests that such jobs are mainly subsumed into the 'part-time seasonal' category in the miscellaneous tourism sector. Thus, in both the hotel and miscellaneous sectors, about one-half of all jobs are full-time permanent, with a further 35-40 per cent in the seasonal/casual category.

Just over half of all the employment in the miscellaneous sector is taken by women. This participation rate, while considerably less than that for the hotel sector (66 per cent), is nevertheless in excess of the female participation rate in services employment in general (44 per cent), and considerably in excess

Table 3.6 Structure of employment in the Irish miscellaneous tourism sector, 1991

Employment category	As % of total employment	Women as % of category
Full-time permanent	49.9	48.0
Part-time permanent	10.4	54.9
Full-time seasonal	22.1	55.8
Part-time seasonal	17.5	38.0
Total	100.0	52.3

Sources: CERT (1991); authors' additional calculations.

of the proportion of women in the overall workforce (31 per cent). As with the hotel sector, women are under-represented in the full-time permanent category and over-represented in the part-time/seasonal categories; however, the divergences from the overall average female participation rate are not as marked as in hotel employment, where women are overwhelmingly dominant in the latter categories.

Of the 40 separate activities covered in the CERT survey, just seven account for almost 60 per cent of all employment. While the survey does not provide the detailed and systematic analysis of skill levels contained in the CERT (1987) survey of the hotel sector, some general indications can be gleaned from the report. Thus, only one-quarter of employment in caravan/camping sites is full-time permanent, and two-thirds of this is male, whereas two-thirds of seasonal employment is female. Most jobs in this activity are unskilled.

By contrast, over four-fifths of employment in car hire is full-time permanent, and this is mostly male. This coincides with a high level of good-quality employment in sales, maintenance and administration. Golf courses portray an even division between full-time permanent and other forms of employment, but in both cases, some two-thirds of employment is male. In historic houses, the bulk of employment is either part-time or seasonal, with over 80 per cent of seasonal workers being female, compared with one-half of those who are full-time permanent.

Irish language courses provide almost entirely seasonal employment, most of which provides supplementary income for teachers and those providing accommodation (both largely female). Language centres (mainly involved in teaching English to continental Europeans) provide a sizeable amount of full-time permanent employment (about two-fifths of the total), although the majority of jobs are seasonal. Teachers are the main occupational group involved, and these, in turn, are mainly women.

Craft production is something of an exception to the general pattern of women primarily being involved in either seasonal or unskilled (or both) forms of employment in this sector. The great bulk (70 per cent) of employment in this activity is full-time permanent, a high proportion is skilled (almost one-third are craft workers), yet women predominate (70 per cent of all workers).

Overall, however, it is clear that the general pattern of employment in the miscellaneous tourism sector replicates that of the hotel sector, with women being disproportionately represented in the sector's workforce in comparison with other sectors outside tourism, and that this is particularly the case with part-time and seasonal work, which itself is much more common throughout the tourism industry than it is in the economy generally.

Women and the provision of bed and breakfast accommodation

One sector of the tourism industry which is almost exclusively dominated by women is the bed and breakfast (B&B) sector. In 1991 there were over 3,200 premises involved in this business which had been approved by Bord Fáilte; this was an increase of almost 40 per cent on the number reported by CERT (1987) for 1985. Using the ratios contained in CERT (1987), these 3,200 establishments would have represented 7,500 jobs, 70 per cent of them seasonal, and 90 per cent female, converting to 3,330 full-time equivalents. Over half of these premises are located in the seven west coast counties stretching from Kerry to Donegal.

However, for each approved B&B establishment, it is estimated that there are three unapproved operations (Ó Cinnéide and Walsh, 1991), which suggests that, in all, there are up to 13,000 B&B premises in the country. It is unlikely that the unapproved operations provide a similar level of employment to their approved counterparts, in which investment levels are generally higher. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to suggest that, overall, the B&B sector provides employment for upwards of 20,000 people (mostly women), or about 9,000 full-time equivalents.

An exploratory survey of 35 B&B establishments was carried out by the authors in early 1992 in the Killarney area in the south-west of Ireland in order to examine a number of themes concerning the nature of employment in the sector. Killarney, with a population of about 10,000, is Ireland's leading tourist resort, based on the internationally renowned lake and moun-

tain scenery in the vicinity. The town has 28 hotels, 162 approved B&B establishments, and a wide range of additional accommodation facilities, including unapproved B&Bs, hostels, holiday centres, caravan and camping sites, and self-catering facilities.

The survey found that one-half of the premises started up in the previous five years, indicating rapid recent growth in the sector, in line with government objectives for tourism in general. Two-thirds of the respondents reported working more than eight hours per day, with over one-half working more than twelve hours. While clearly this pattern would not be maintained throughout the year, it does indicate a lot of hard work on the part of the women involved. Three-quarters of respondents regarded their B&B business as a full-time job.

Almost all the respondents identified aspects of the business which they did not like, the principal ones being the amount and type of work involved, and the fact that they were tied down to their work all the time and got little chance of a break. At the same time, most respondents also identified aspects of the work which they liked, almost all of which had to do with meeting people. The great majority of respondents thought that doing B&B suited their lifestyle. The small number who expanded on this mentioned such things as being able to work at home (especially where children had to be cared for also) or to be one's own boss, or that they would not be working otherwise.

Only three respondents had given up paid work to start their B&B business: the rest were not gainfully occupied immediately prior to starting the business. Most had been in unskilled employment earlier in their lives. There was strong evidence that many respondents were involved in B&B out of economic necessity: no less than one-half said there was no one else in the household in employment. In addition, six cited the cost of educating their children as a specific reason for being in B&B: almost all of these had no other source of earned income.

The overall picture to emerge from this survey was of an occupation involving long hours of what amounts to a lot of drudgery, doing work which men refuse to do, either because of the nature of the work, or because of the economic returns. While information on income was not obtained, we would

suggest that, in most cases, the rate of return is low relative to the number of hours worked and the responsibility involved, and relative to what one would have to pay someone else to do the work in question. Nevertheless, most of the respondents intended to continue with the business, whether because of economic necessity, the zero 'opportunity cost' (lack of alternatives), or the limited expectations of women who mainly came from an unskilled background.

CONCLUSION

The tourism industry in Ireland portrays characteristics which are essentially no different from the situation in most other areas. It is a highly seasonal and unstable economic sector in which part-time and unskilled employment are common features. The fact that these types of employment are mainly taken up by women is primarily a reflection of the generally marginal status of women in the Irish workforce.

Serious questions must be raised concerning the high levels of resources currently being invested in tourism development by both the Irish government and the European Community. The high proportion of poor-quality employment which typifies tourism ensures that the industry holds out little hope of helping Ireland close the income gap with the EC heartland. A strong emphasis on tourism growth therefore serves to confirm Ireland's peripheral status within the Community, relying on the spending in Ireland of wealth generated in highly productive advanced economic activities in the core regions of Europe and other parts of the developed world.

It can be argued that, in the long term, the resources currently being invested in tourism development in Ireland might be better spent in building up an alternative economic base in similar advanced sectors. Of course, if such were to be the case, the types of job which would be created would present limited employment opportunities for Irish women, given existing social structures. However, for the present authors, it seems preferable to challenge these structures, rather than to acquiesce in the kinds of work offered in such quantity by the tourism industry.

NOTE

* While CERT (1988) provides a very detailed breakdown of the workforce in the Irish hotel and guesthouse sector in terms of gender division, occupations and skill levels, there remain a number of information gaps which made it necessary to make some assumptions in order to facilitate the analysis which follows. Further elucidation of these assumptions is available from the authors on request.

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