

## Chapter 25

# Gender and Feminist Perspectives in Tourism Research

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Tourism processes are gendered in their construction, presentation, and consumption in multifaceted ways; gendered societies shape gendered tourism practices, which in turn shore up those gendered societies. Whether we describe ourselves as feminists or not, if we are reflexive students of tourism practices and experiences then it is incumbent to ask “is tourism gender just?” Many people engaged in equal rights activism do not consider themselves feminists, while advocates of gender equality of both sexes argue that men cannot be feminists but can be profeminists (Lingard and Douglas, 1999). Feminism’s call to arms is not grounded in a gender, but in a commitment to rejecting androcentric bias and challenging sexist oppression. Feminist tourism scholarship is espousal of a commitment to addressing gender inequality in tourism and to improving women’s experiences and conditions as tourism workers and consumers. Feminists seek to define, establish, and defend equal political, economic, and social rights for women; as such feminism is largely focused on women’s issues, but as it seeks gender equality, Bell Hooks (2000: viii), among others, argues that men’s liberation is a necessary part of feminism and that both women *and* men are diminished by sexism; as she comments, feminism is “a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.”

One of feminism’s characteristics is its resistance to definition. As a heterogeneous set of epistemologies and critiques of masculinist knowledge traditions, feminism (more accurately feminisms) has been mapped as three waves of thinking: feminist empiricism, standpoint feminism, and poststructural feminism (Wearing, 1998). The first wave – feminist empiricism or liberal feminism – focused on women’s legal rights and suffrage and sprang from the urban industrialism and liberal politics of the late nineteenth century. Tourism researchers engaging in feminist empiricism have developed scrutiny of tourism participation and employment which highlights and addresses gender inequality; often termed an “add women and stir” approach, it has been critiqued for failing to challenge the underlying structures permeating masculinist domination (Harding, 1993).

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Second-wave or standpoint feminism developed during the 1960s civil rights and antiwar movements, which saw the growing self-consciousness of minority groups (Ramazonğlu and Holland, 2002). For these feminists, confrontation of gendered power relations requires different social “standpoints” such as class (Marxist feminism), class and sexuality (socialist feminism), sexuality (radical feminism), or race (black feminism). Standpoint tourism researchers attempt to critique society by giving voice to disempowered people and marginalized discourses (Harding, 1993). Third-wave or poststructuralist feminism unfolded in the mid-1990s and, shaped by postcolonialism and postmodernism, is associated with difference, with speaking from the margins, and positioning self and other within multiple oppressions (Butler, 1993); poststructuralist feminists have deconstructed the masculinized language and practice of tourism and identified the cultural workings of gender power relations (e.g. Veijola and Jokinen, 1994; Johnston, 2001). It is not my intention to rehearse feminism’s contributions to tourism inquiry, as this has been done previously (e.g. Aitchison, 2006). Rather I review five topics to illustrate the breadth of feminist tourism research: research and education, employment and empowerment, sex tourism, sexualized tourism environments, and sexual harassment. Each wave of feminist thinking has enhanced our understandings of these topics, and each topic reveals gendered power relations and the precariousness of many women’s lives worldwide.

### Tourism Research and Education

Positivist industry-focused “malestream” knowledge traditions have long dominated tourism scholarship (Pritchard and Morgan, 2007a) and while feminism’s commitment to social critique and recognition of multiple truths has much to offer tourism inquiry, its influence remains peripheral. This contrasts with other fields and disciplines (such as history and sociology), where feminists have pioneered significant reinterpretation and advanced new lines of inquiry. Feminist research does not exist as a subfield of tourism as it does elsewhere; it is a minority interest, “. . . clearly detrimental to one’s career . . . while the biases in . . . knowledge due to the politics of *masculinism* go largely unnoticed” (Oakley, 2006, p. 19). Gender is perceived as a disruptive and marginal discourse; as one academic comments: “When I talk to my department . . . about issues of gender I’m automatically labelled as a feminist. . . . When *he* talks about any general topic, he . . . talks . . . from a very masculine point of view . . . his discourse is normalised, mine is not” (Tribe, 2010: 15).

There has been reflexive critique of tourism knowledge (Ren et al., 2010), some prompted by feminist inquiry, but few tourism researchers acknowledge their own identities. For many (especially senior figures) this remains unarticulated because as white, middle-class men they are the self, the same, the norm against which others are measured (Kimmel, 1996). Tourism’s influential organizations such as the International Academy for the Study of Tourism have a membership which is almost 90% male, its dominant “Anglo-Saxon” institutions have few female professors and men dominate its journal editorial boards (Pritchard and Morgan, 2007a). Tourism reflects global higher education’s structural gender inequalities, where women are underrepresented in tenured and senior positions and suffer a serious pay gap (Marcus, 2006) but these inequalities are particularly skewed in tourism, perhaps because it is predominantly taught in the masculine worlds of business schools (Pritchard and Morgan, 2007a). This has implications for what and how we study, and how we value research. Studies suggest that UK and US doctoral programs eschew topics of gender and social critique and that sponsoring bodies worldwide dismiss its “seriousness” (Botterill et al., 2003).

It is vital that we question “who controls what, how hierarchies are built, maintained and changed and how equity occurs” (Swain, 2004, p. 102) as a field’s gatekeepers are responsible for establishing the parameters in which its academics are encouraged to work. “Tourism research carries with it a subtle power to define; to skew; to objectify; to foreground some issues leaving others untouched” (Tribe, 2006: 375), normalizing how we know tourism as a research field and an industry. There are serious implications for our field when some senior male academics believe that tourism knowledge has been fully mapped and there remains no unexplored terrain (Tribe, 2010). Such a situation does not make for inclusive scholarship, especially at a time of a feminization of higher education. The numbers of female students now outnumber men globally and the proportion of female academics is rising worldwide; in the UK there is almost gender balance in academia (Fazackerley and Hughes, 2006). Tourism must recognize feminine and masculine voices equally among its senior academicians if it is to be representative of its wider academy. Moreover, it must welcome gender-oriented and feminist tourism scholarship if it is to play a role in advocating for gender just tourism.

### **Women, Employment, and Empowerment**

Women everywhere remain severely disadvantaged compared to men across all social criteria and classifications. Women constitute half of the world’s population, yet do two-thirds of the work for a tenth of the paid income and own less than 1% of the land. Three out of every four war fatalities are women and children while women make up 66% of the world’s illiterate adults and 75% of its refugees. Three-quarters of the world’s poor are women. Most shockingly, one in three women worldwide suffer from gender-based violence (infanticide, neglect, abuse, domestic violence, “honour killings,” sex trafficking, forced labor, etc.), which is the biggest global cause of female injury and death (US Aid, 2013; Women’s Learning Partnership, 2013). Tourism’s growth, size, and flexibility give it enormous potential to advance women economically, socially, and politically (Ghodsee, 2005). It is a disproportionately important employer for women, particularly in less economically developed countries, and women’s employment in tourism can significantly improve not only their own lives but also those of their families and communities (UNWTO, 2011).

Insufficient attention has been paid to how tourism can empower women, although it is vital to the Millennium Development Goals of employment and poverty reduction and women’s empowerment (UNWTO, 2011). Women’s tourism labor remains underexplored and it is difficult to estimate the numbers of women employed in tourism (Swain and Momsen, 2002). The UNWTO (2011) *Global Report on Women in Tourism, 2010* provides a fuller picture of women’s global tourism employment (although lacks data from Europe and North America). The report confirms that one in 12 of the world’s workforce is employed in tourism and two-thirds are women, attracted in part by the industry’s low entry barriers and flexible working hours. Tourism also provides significant entrepreneurial opportunities for women who are twice as likely to be employers in the tourism industry as in other industrial sectors. They in turn often employ more women than men, thus generating further female employment opportunities. Tourism offers considerable potential for women’s activism and leadership in community and political life. Women hold more ministerial positions in tourism than in any other field, although they still only account for a fifth of all tourism ministers and tourist board chairs. Thus, “even in areas where women in tourism perform better than women in other sectors of the economy, women still lag far behind men” (UNWTO 2011: 43).

Such reports reveal that tourism employment is far from gender just and promotes women's economic and sexual exploitation through employment practices that abuse precarious workers (Women First, 2010). Tourism and hospitality have long been vertically and horizontally gender segregated, so that women are overrepresented in low-paid occupations and underrepresented in decision-making roles (Women First, 2010). Tourism has long been characterized as "dirty work" and little has changed despite its professionalization. Tourism work is often demeaning, stressful, physically exhausting, and low paid; it often involves unsocial and exploitative working conditions and has limited training and career opportunities (Hoel and Einarsen, 2003). Women are largely denied access to mentoring opportunities (as employers do not regard them as career-oriented) and suffer sexual harassment, stereotyping, sexual exploitation, and promotion and salary discrimination (Rydsik et al., 2012).

The gender pay gap is very evident in tourism, with men paid more across virtually all its occupations; in the UK, male hotel managers and travel agents earn 17% more than their female equivalents, and male leisure and theme park attendants 30% more (Women First, 2010). Just as in tourism academia, senior management in the tourism industry does not reflect the profiles of either its rank and file employees or its customers. The industry is failing to draw on women's experiences and talents, with consequences for its business performance as companies with greater female representation at board level generally outperform their rivals (Catalyst, 2007). Across all sectors women constitute fewer than 7% of executive directors but while progress has been made in traditionally masculine sectors such as resource extraction, construction, and aerospace (Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2013), women worldwide (with some exceptions, such as in Scandinavia) have made little impact in the boardrooms of the female-dependent tourism industry. Women First (2010) identifies five key barriers to women's advancement to management in tourism: problems of combining senior roles with caring responsibilities, dominant masculine organizational cultures, preconceptions and gender bias, exclusion from networks, and lack of senior women role models.

A mixed picture for women emerges in tourism employment, reflecting the global position of women. Tourism provides vital employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for women; it also offers an avenue for women's activism and leadership. However, it assists women's economic and sexual exploitation, particularly young, ethnic minority, and migrant workers. The gender pay gap is evident across the sector and management levels remain male-dominated. In addition, tourism generates considerable unpaid work for women in family tourism businesses so that women subsidize the industry and for little reward (Enloe, 1989). This is a ". . . troubling [picture] for a gender analysis of the tourism industry . . . [which] makes little contribution to women's socio-economic empowerment" (UNWTO 2011: 41). Tourism can empower women but it can be seriously exploitative and some of its most precarious working environments also reveal a dark underbelly of prostitution, human trafficking, and sexual harassment.

### **Tourism and the Global Sex Trade**

Tourism has long been deeply complicit in the global sex trade. The outcome of a gendered tourism industry and international system, sex tourism has a sizable literature (e.g. Carter and Clift, 2000). Its development "as a legitimate leisure industry . . . in which women and children are literally 'men's leisure'" (Jeffreys, 1999: 179) is founded on three factors: acute poverty, tourists socialized into seeing women in less economically developed countries as sexually available, and an international system that promotes sex tourism (Enloe, 1989).

It is a flourishing multibillion dollar industry contributing significantly to some South Asian countries' gross domestic products (Shelley, 2010). Lubricated and promoted by the Internet, it revolves around "comparatively rich men buying poor women" (MacKinnon, 2009) and is highly racialized as global sex tourists disproportionately victimize women of colour "because of the lure of racialized gender stereotypes" (Hernandez, 2001: 185). Sex tourism is a global industry which attracts men from all over the world. Habitual sex tourists have been identified as largely white, Western heterosexual men aged 35–55 (Kempadoo, 1999) but sex tourists come from all racial and ethnic groups. For instance there is a growing trade in so-called young Indian Muslim "one month wives" purchased for a short period by Middle Eastern and African Muslim men (Nelson, 2013) and an emergent "female sex tourism," although without large-scale studies scoping this phenomenon remains difficult (Sanders, 2011).

The vast majority of sex tourism demonstrates the silencing of women's power and agency as many of the women are trafficked in the world's second most profitable illegal industry. An estimated 27 million people are trafficked for \$30 billion profit every year; 70% of those in the European Union being women forced into sexual exploitation, while over 2 million children are forced into commercial sex, largely in Southeast Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe (Shelley, 2010; Bales, 2012). While the tourism industry has been concerned about child sex tourism, the same cannot be said about adult sex tourism; yet the two are inextricably intertwined (Jeffreys, 1999). Many abused children are teenage girls forced into working bars and brothels in less economically developed countries where they are abused by men "who neither know nor care how young the girls are" (Jeffreys, 1999: 179). Yet tourism industry bodies fail to act against the sexual exploitation and trafficking of women. Instead "migration and trafficking of women . . . to service the tourist trade is commonplace . . . global tourism . . . [has] given the sex industry new means of exploiting, marketing and supplying women and children as commodities to buyers" (EQUATIONS, 2007: 70).

### **Tourism and the Sexualization of Everyday Life**

The expanding global sex trade can be seen within the context of a sexualization of the public domain that entails the emergence of new taste formations and a "pornographication" of sex and intimacy (Attwood, 2006). This sexualization of culture increasingly objectifies women across every media form including television, film, magazines, video games, the Internet, and advertising (Pritchard and Morgan, 2010a). For example, Trantner and Hatton's (2011) five-decade longitudinal study demonstrates a dramatic increase in hypersexualized images so that by the 2000s 83% of women were depicted as sexualized or hypersexualized. Sexualization is four-fold: someone's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal, someone is held to a standard that equates narrowly defined attractiveness with being sexy, someone is sexually objectified or made into a thing for others' sexual use, and/or sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon someone. Any one condition indicates sexualization and anyone can be sexualized, although it is usually women and girls (American Psychology Association, 2007). Our models of femininity are increasingly hypersexualized and those who frequently consume such images offer stronger endorsement of sexual stereotypes that objectify women. They also place appearance at the center of women's value, and girls tend to engage in self-objectification whereby they think of their own bodies as objects of others' desires (Zurbriggen and Morgan, 2006).

Tourism is intimately connected with desire (Mackie, 2000) and its gendered visual rhetoric perpetuates sexual ideological constructs, while its experiences are framed by discourses

of embodied desire, sensuality, and hedonism (Pritchard and Morgan, 2007b, 2010b). Tourism sites such as resorts and nightclubs and rituals such as Spring Break and Carnival are liminal zones closely identified with pleasure, desire, and sexuality (Pritchard and Morgan, 2010b). They are dominated by highly circumscribed forms of masculinity and femininity and in many cases women “. . . are explicitly positioned as the site of spectacle, display and consumption” (Van Eeden, 2007: 201). Tourism environments are “hot” climates, highly aestheticized environments which emphasize style and sensuousness, ingredients which create “a sexual simmer” (Mano and Gabriel, 2006). The way tourism environments are represented and marketed actively creates a discourse of sexuality and it comes as no surprise that female tourism employees face very high rates of sexual harassment and exploitation.

### **Tourism’s “Hot” Environments and Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is a manifestation of gendered power relations and the commoditization of women; it is also the product of the sexualization of tourism’s spaces and its workers (Pritchard and Morgan, 2006; Rydsik et al., 2012). Female employees are often precarious workers, especially if they are young, junior, or migrants. Dress codes and uniforms are often designed to enhance their attractiveness and they are encouraged to flirt and “sell” their sexuality in service encounters; such women are reliant upon “referent power to be socially attractive and friendly with the customer . . . [and become a] ‘sexual being’ ” (Gilbert et al., 1998: 49–50). Female hotel receptionists are objects of sexual gratification, “superficial projection[s] of an image created by men for other men” (Mason, 1988: 245). This sexualization of work practices and environments is not restricted to hotels but extends across many tourism environments, which thus pose considerable risks for female employees (Guerrier and Adib, 2000).

It seems that sexual harassment is particularly prevalent in the tourism and hospitality industries, but it is difficult to establish its extent (Nickerson, 2012). Sexual harassment respects no geographic or cultural boundaries and is “disguised by the conspiracy of silence which surrounds the issue” (Gilbert et al., 1998: 49), including in academia, which has failed to investigate sexual harassment beyond a handful of studies in the hospitality sector (e.g. Guerrier and Adib, 2000). As a result, its frequency remains unknown but available research suggests that at least one in four hospitality employees are harassed at work (Euro Agency for Health and Safety at Work, 2000). This may well be an underestimation as a New Orleans study recorded harassment rates of 75% (Agrusa et al., 2002) and research with student placements suggests that almost 60% in the UK (Worsfold and McCann, 2001) and over 90% in Taiwan (Lin, 2006) experience unwanted sexual attention at work.

Sexual harassment is regarded as a human resource issue but its impacts extend much further. The line between harmless “horseplay” or “jokes” and harassment is blurred (Poulson, 2007) but sexual harassment is an act of violence. It involves the misuse of power and reflects the ability of one person (a colleague, superior, or customer) to abuse, humiliate, and degrade another. Most victims of sexual harassment in the sector are women in junior positions and sexual harassment also has a strong racial element (Hernandez, 2001). Its consequences vary from person to person and depend on the severity of the harassment but it is a form of sexual assault and can have substantial psychological and physical effects that also impact on a business’ performance through high levels of staff turnover and absenteeism.

Sexual harassment is not restricted to tourism employees and, following high-profile attacks, governments and pressure groups have highlighted the extent of sexual assaults and

harassment perpetrated against female travelers (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2013). Harassment of tourists in general is a neglected area of study, but is pervasive and global and in the case of sexual harassment overwhelmingly experienced by women. "In developing countries in particular, various forms of sexual harassment proliferate . . . [and have] long been a permanent feature across the tourism landscape" (McElroy et al., 2008: 97). Empirical data on the nature and level of sexual harassment experienced by women while on holiday is even harder to establish than while in the workplace. Much of it can be defined as street harassment, "a highly symbolic form of violence" in which women are assaulted and humiliated by men (Peoples, 2008: 4).

One study of sexual harassment undertaken by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (2008) found that high numbers of Egyptian (46%) and foreign (52%) women reported daily harassment (including touching, ogling, verbal harassment, stalking, and indecent exposure), particularly of working women and tourists. Foreign women also reported additional forms of sexual harassment including sexual "jokes" and aggressive unwelcome dinner or drinks invitations; this also happened regardless of what they were wearing, countering suggestions that foreign female tourists who dress immodestly are more at risk. In all, 83% of Egyptian and 98% of foreign women reported sexual harassment, while 62% of Egyptian men admitted engaging in it. The street, public transport, and tourist destinations were the most common locations for these unwanted advances and, as with workplace harassment, a conspiracy of silence exists as only 2% of women reported their experiences. Women who suffer sexual harassment and sexual assault in tourism environments are not just victims of local offenders, but also of other tourists. In a survey of 6500 British and German Mediterranean holiday-makers aged 16–35, women were the most likely to have experienced sexual harassment during their holiday although gay and bisexual men reported similar sexual harassment levels (Calafat et al., 2013). The study authors suggest that the tourism industry and resort authorities should work to create tourism environments where sexual aggression is not tolerated. Given tourism's inherent discourses of hedonism and pleasure, its reliance on sexualized marketing and employees and its underbelly's connectivities to the illegal sex trade, this seems unachievable.

### **Epilogue: Theoretical, Methodological, and Practice Reflections**

This chapter has reviewed how feminism's rejection of androcentric prejudice and sexist oppression has enhanced understandings of the relationships between gender and tourism. In briefly assessing the most traversed topics in the area there is a danger that I have confirmed the stereotypical view of gender and tourism as a narrow field of inquiry of "women's issues", principally sex tourism, gender discrimination, and sexist advertising. Yet a review such as this must consider the extant literature and it remains dominated by these topics. However, the subfield of gender and tourism should ideally encompass every type of tourism interaction as gender and sexuality plays out and shapes all aspects of tourism, and not just concerning women, as examination of masculinities is seriously deficient in tourism inquiry. There is a pressing need to expand the field of gender and tourism as we must know more about the existing terrain (tourism labor, sex tourism, sexual harassment, etc.) and open up new lines of tourism inquiry around women's sexual behavior, their embodiments, their experiences as carers and partners, their exclusion from tourism participation through lack of opportunities, their experiences as entrepreneurs and community leaders, and so forth. Above all, we need

more scholarship which deconstructs how gender intersects with other vectors of oppression such as race, ethnicity, dis/ability, class, age, etc.

In addition to adding to the scope and scale of our knowledge – what we know – feminist scholarship can also transform how we know tourism through an epistemological and methodological contribution. Feminism has much to offer tourism studies as a set of epistemologies and movements committed to confronting oppression and empowering marginalized people: a set of ideologies that combine activism and scholarship and which seek transformation (Heintum and Morgan, 2012). Being able to answer why a piece of tourism research is feminist is important, as scrutinizing how we engage feminisms in research opens up debate with nonfeminists of what feminisms offer tourism researchers that nonfeminist research cannot and vice versa. Tourism studies has much to offer feminist debates and wider discussions of gender inequalities as nowhere is gender inequity more evident than in the tourism industry. Feminist empiricism, standpoint feminism, and poststructural feminism have each contributed to understandings of the relationships between gender and tourism and have more to offer; so too do queer theory, ecofeminism, postcolonial feminism, transgender politics, womanism (with its focus on racial inequalities), and cyberfeminism, to name a few (Kolmar and Bartkowski, 2013). As we move through the early decades of the twenty-first century, feminism is being reconstituted into feminisms, ones that go beyond gender as the central construct in defining any feminism, beyond dichotomous views of power and beyond conceptions of the body as the conduit of being and experience. If we are to achieve gender justice and break the silences which oppress women worldwide, the challenge in tourism, as elsewhere, is to advance a genuine gender-based transformation of education, research, and practice.

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