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## **Book Review**

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**Women, leisure and tourism: self-actualization and empowerment through the production and consumption of experience**

**by Linda Ingram, George Mason University, USA, Klára Tarkó, University of Szeged, Hungary, Susan L Socum, George Mason University, USA**

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The book is an impressive insight into the relationship between women, leisure, and tourism. While highlighting the struggle of women in pursuit of leisure due to patriarchy, societal expectations, and sexism, the book also reiterates the relevance of leisure as a tool of empowerment, resistance, and discourse. To truly understand their experiences, the authors have explored intersectionality within leisure by compiling voices of women across nationalities, ages, and colour.

In its introductory chapter, the authors have established that the book is divided into two major themes, women as producers and women as consumers of leisure. The chapters have used diverse methodologies and approaches including case studies, ethnography, netnography etc.

Followed by the introduction, Chapter 2 is a collection of case studies on exemplary women in design, food, and accommodation who had changed the concept of leisure. This chapter indicates that in the past, there were only a few selected women who could break or reform the expectations of society to become iconic producers of leisure. The author explains how their stories are inspiring for they carved their autonomy and identity at a time when women were defined by their male counterparts. Chapter 3 highlights the social moral license given to males to display muscularity, homophobia, and sexism in their pursuit of leisure. Through the lens of post-structural feminism, the authors explain the immoral behaviour and violence against women and girls (VAWG). The chapter highlights the need for collective action and resistance to normalisation of male dominance. Chapter 4 begins with the issue of age while indulging in leisure. The author highlights how aged women who want to participate in sporting leisure activities undergo societal pressures and expectations to act, dress and behave a certain way. Apart from sports, the book also highlights the role of festivals. Chapter 5 provides

an ethnographic study of the Renaissance Festival, where female entrepreneurs feel a sense of community as they share similar experiences as primary care takers and producers of leisure. The chapter discusses how in such forms of leisure participation, female entrepreneurs feel more confident and supported. The conversation on female entrepreneurs continues in Chapter 6. The female lifestyle entrepreneurs were interviewed in rural Verde valley who use their creativity to indulge in serious leisure to express and sustain themselves. The authors debate that success in entrepreneurship is different for males and females. The need to change the traditional male hegemonic approach to entrepreneurship was emphasised in this chapter.

In Chapter 7, the authors bring forth another important aspect of leisure. The recent #Me too movement has brought about stories of assault at leisure-based events. The chapter explains the meaning and importance of consent in pursuit of leisure. The Burning Man festival is used as an example to understand how consent and safety is ensured at the event. The authors put forward the need for the inclusion of such measures in other events to create a safe space for pursuing leisure.

In Chapter 8, intersectionality provides a glimpse into the inter and intrapersonal barriers faced by aged women in pursuing leisure. The authors consider this as an opportunity for tourism and leisure producers to be more aware and inclusive of this unique group. Chapter 9 expands the discussion on inclusivity by giving voice to marginalised Syrian woman refugees in Turkey. The authors conduct a study on their participation in non-formal leisure-based learning. Through voluntourism in Turkey, courses are offered on computer, language, and personal development. Such forms of leisure, according to the authors, empower and reintegrate women refugees into society.

The book also links leisure with freedom to indulge in spirituality. Chapter 10 is an ethnographic study on the pilgrimage of Parsi women to Zoroastrian temples in Iran. The author provides a glimpse of how women interact and pursue leisure as pilgrims. The book has further included the recent trends of leisure via the internet. In Chapter 11, the discussion shifts to women in the gaming space. The authors discuss the hypersexualised portrayal and the inherent masculinity of the gaming world. The virtual space is also effectively used to understand newer segments of women as consumers of leisure. In Chapter 12, a netnographic study of the Guimi segment in China, reveals how women feel safe, free, and relaxed when indulging in leisure activities with their female friends. The book has also presented cross-cultural studies. In Chapter 13, experiences of a woman African American or Africana researcher and tourist in Africa is discussed. The chapter is a wonderful insight into what women diaspora travellers of colour face. It discusses their efforts to engage in a male dominated society and the several identities bestowed upon them.

The last two chapters use a strong methodological approach to bring forth intersectionality. Chapter 14 is a multivariate analysis on the differences in the time spent on leisure of male and females in Italy. Leisure time of women is dependent on various socio-economic and cultural factors. The auto-ethnographic study of urban women in India in Chapter 15, also uncovers the complex factors of religion, caste, class, financial status, and autonomy in pursuit of leisure. This study reveals how experience of leisure is extremely varied and stratified for women in India than from women in the West.

The last chapter concludes the discussion by stating that despite their varied identities, leisure is a space for empowerment and transformation for women. The book contributes to the expansion of gender studies by including the social realities and power relations in leisure and tourism. However, the chapters could have been better connected,

distributed, and re-arranged under common sub-themes or units, for elaborate understanding of the topic. Nevertheless, the book is a great starting point to recognise the complex relationship between women, leisure, and tourism. Scholars and researchers can use this to include more voices or expand research into this domain.