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## **Book Review**

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### **A Research Agenda for Gender and Tourism**

**by: Erica Wilson and Donna Chambers (Editors)**

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Research on gender in tourism is by no means a new topic and indeed, this is highlighted early on by the editors in their introductory chapter. They provide a succinct and insightful overview of the phases of scholarship on gender and tourism, spanning issues related to gendered experiences of tourists, empowerment and tourism, sustainable tourism, gendered representations in marketing and media and LGBTQ+ tourism, encapsulating gender and tourism as a complex and multi-dimensional field of inquiry. Parallel to this, the editors recognise that while gender and tourism is a burgeoning field, it remains marginalised, despite the increase in numbers of gender-related publications in tourism. Importantly, the editors are cognizant of COVID-19 pandemic that unfolded during the editing and editing phases of this book, and highlight the way in which the evolution of the pandemic provided even more primacy and currency to the topic. This volume, rather than acting as a reflective, historical overview of gender and tourism, sets out to be a visionary and forward-looking approach for the self-proclaimed ‘gender ignition’ of tourism research (Wilson and Chambers, 2023, p.3). The book aims to achieve “take-off and expansion” (Wilson and Chambers, 2023) for exploring new and emerging issues in gender and tourism.

This volume, consisting of 3 parts, includes contributions from 19 scholars from a diverse range of backgrounds and disciplines. Part I sets the scene with a consideration of Theory, Analysis and Review of gender-related studies in tourism. It begins with a thought-provoking chapter by Pristed Nielsen (2023) (Chapter 2) on gender and tourism in island locations. Her work explores the importance of ‘island feminism’ and makes a call for more sophisticated methodologies in gender-aware tourism research. The following two chapters progress the discussion by taking an analytical perspective on gender and tourism. In Chapter 3, Elaine Chiao Ling Yang analyses the role of migrant women in the hospitality industry and advocates for a so-called ‘syndemic’ framework, whereby synergies in the intersection of contextual factors and social inequalities along with impacts of the pandemic are examined. Importantly, Yang calls for migrant workers to be given a voice as a means of avoiding the exploitation and destitution that existing in the pre-pandemic world. Examining gender equality reporting in tourism, Jess Sanggyeong Je and Elaine Chiao Ling Yang adopt a gender-sensitive approach to

Sustainability Reporting, and find largely substandard practices in the tourism industry and a need for further research that interrogates internal company documents for the implementation of gender equality initiatives. The final chapter in this part, Chapter 5, is a review by Rafiah Almathami and Judith Mair on socio-cultural barriers to women's participation in the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia. As one of the priority areas of the Saudi Vision 2030, tourism has been identified as a catalyst for economic stimulus and job creation, and their review of the literature demonstrates a dearth of research on the circumstances of women in tourism workplaces in Saudi Arabia. This subsequent lack of understanding of the specific challenges facing these women is problematic and underscore the need for further research in this area in order to inform the changes needed to address gender inequality within the Saudi tourism workforces.

The completion of part I provides an apt segue into Part II which explores issues of gender in tourism workplaces. Hosseini, Gorji, Macías and García's contribution in Chapter 6 explores the role of women in Iranian tourism and the associated barriers they face. Importantly, this chapter also identifies routes to female empowerment through continuous employment in the industry as a means of overcoming or accepting challenges, ultimately leading to greater levels of self-confidence, strength, independence and status. Chapter 7 explores issues related to shift work through the lens of migrant female workers in Macao. As in earlier chapters, the precarity and vulnerability of workers in these situations is highlighted, as is the reality that the brunt of these conditions are invariably faced by migrant shift-working women. The result, highlighted by Basnyat and Mun, is one of the highest employee turnover rates in the world in an industry that relies so heavily on the migrant female workforce. Their principal recommendation is to increase remuneration for these employees, as a means of improving feelings of self-worth, connecting positively with their employer and compensating for physical, mental and social losses from pre-existing workplace conditions. The final chapter in this section, Chapter 8, moves to the experiences of Colombian women working in the tourism industry and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, together with the intersections of gender power relations at home and at work. The scarcity of research in Latin America, as well as work that explores the mechanisms of 'power-over' dynamics is highlighted.

Part III lastly, turns to gendered experiences in tourism. These are explored from dual perspectives of female researchers in the field (Chapter 9) and female researchers attending academic conferences as a means of disseminating research findings (Chapter 10). Schänzel and Porter in Chapter 9 articulate a series of useful, tangible recommendations to immediately support the challenges faced by female researchers in 'the field'. Frew and Mair's final contribution to the book, Chapter 10, reveals the importance of academic friendships at research conferences and the role they play in supporting shared identities and solidarity in what remains a highly gendered landscape.

This volume, through its combination of conceptual and empirical stories, provides a narrative for gender and tourism research that is both insightful and illuminating. At the outset, the aim of this volume was articulated to be a mechanism for 'gender ignition', and an exploration of the authors' "imagining of a future of gender and tourism research" (Wilson and Chambers, 2023, p.3). As a whole, the volume covers territory around not only gender, but also race, ethics, culture, mobility and others. Each chapter makes thoughtful and relevant recommendations for paths of further enquiry, thus culminating in a meaningful roadmap for future research, articulated by the editors in Chapter 11. The

book is a valuable resource for Postgraduate researchers and scholars and provides a stimulating and enlightening perspective on such an important field of research.

### **References**

- Pristed Nielsen, H. (2023) 'Theorising gender and tourism in island locations', in Wilson, E. and Chambers, D. (Eds.): *A Research Agenda for Gender and Tourism*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK.
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