

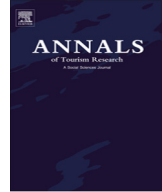


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## Tourism gender research: A critical accounting



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### ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to rouse debate about the workings of tourism enquiry as a knowledge-generating system through its critical accounting of the sub-field of tourism gender research. This accounting includes a gender-aware bibliometric analysis of 466 journal papers published during 1985–2012, which categorises the sub-field's prevailing themes and methodologies and identifies its most prolific authors and popular journals. It contends that, despite three decades of study and a recent increase in papers, tourism gender research remains marginal to tourism enquiry, disarticulated from wider feminist and gender-aware initiatives and lacks the critical mass of research leaders, publications, citations and multi-institutional networks, which characterise other tourism sub-fields. The paper identifies two possible futures for gender-aware tourism research: stagnation or ignition.

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### Introduction

Tourism is a constellation of human practices, behaviours and activities, which are gendered in their construction, presentation and consumption. Whilst it is constituted in various time- and context-specific ways, gender is a system of beliefs and practices that create or maintain a sense of difference between women and men (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and is produced, sustained, and

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renewed through an intricate arrangement of practices and shared understandings within a given society (Thompson & Armato, 2012). Since gender is embedded in the individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions of societies (Risman, 2004, 2009), women and men participate in and experience tourism differently as both consumers and producers (e.g. Byrne & Henshall, 2002; Pritchard, Morgan, Ateljevic, & Harris, 2007; Swain, 1995, 2005). Women have been travelling for centuries (e.g. McEwan, 2000) and are tourism consumers and decision-makers in many societies (e.g. Mottiar & Quinn, 2004). They are disproportionately important to the tourism industry everywhere and it in turn is critically important to many women worldwide. Tourism offers women an avenue for activism and leadership in community and political life and provides vital employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, so that two-thirds of the world's tourism workforce is female and they are almost twice as likely to be employers in tourism as in other industrial sectors (World Tourism Organization, 2011). However, tourism simultaneously shores up women's economic and sexual exploitation through abusive employment practices that increase the vulnerability of precarious workers, whilst the industry's gendered marketing rhetoric is well documented (Pritchard, 2014).

Although women are significant consumers and producers of tourism products and experiences, tourism enquiry has been surprisingly gender-blind and reluctant to engage gender-aware frameworks in comparison to cognate disciplines and subject fields (Westwood, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2000). The relationship between tourism and gender only received concerted attention in the mid-1990s, when works including Kinnaird, Kothari, and Hall (1994), Pluss and Frei (1995) and the 1995 *Annals of Tourism Research* special issue edited by Margaret Swain began to build the sub-field (Ramos, Rey-Maqueira, & Tugores, 2002). It is appropriate some 20 years after these landmark works to review and contextualize the progress of tourism gender research as a basis for its future development. Academic renewal in any field of study must encompass a commitment to appraise which research it values and which it marginalizes and the extent to which any field addresses gender is a useful indicator of its epistemological maturity (Fox-Keller, 1995; Pritchard, 2006). This paper aims to present a critical accounting of the corpus of tourism gender research in order to provoke debate about its status and about the health of tourism research in general (Mair & Reid, 2007). We do this through a gender-aware bibliometric analysis of 466 articles. Bibliometric study is an established method of assessing research production in a specific field over a given time period and despite its flaws, gives a useful indication of the development of tourism gender research as a knowledge-generating system (e.g. Diem & Wolter, 2012). The paper is structured to: contextualise the sub-field within tourism enquiry; identify its trajectory and influence; classify its most frequently occurring authors, topics, methodologies, and journals; highlight key omissions and avenues for future research; identify future scenarios for the sub-field's development.

## Tourism knowledge and gender

Tourism research has witnessed remarkable growth and diversification over the last forty years (Li & Xu, 2014). Since the 1970s, the number of universities offering tourism-related studies has increased enormously, creating a subsequent rise in student and graduate numbers (Airey, 2008). Simultaneously, travel and tourism-related journals have grown from a dozen to over 240 titles across all languages (Hunt, Gao, & Xue, 2014). Whether such expansion evidences an inclusive and vibrant global tourism research community has been debated (see McKercher, 2005) and some scholars contend that essentially formulaic and reproductive research vastly outweighs that breaking new epistemological, conceptual or ethical ground (Hall, 2011; Page, 2005). Much of tourism's growth has been in vocationally-oriented business and management schools, which value instrumental, business-facing research (Hall, Williams, & Lew, 2014) framed by the values of scientism, capitalism, neoliberalism, individualism and materialism (Airey, 2008). As a result, tourism scholarship continues to be governed by the technically useful imperatives of the "scientific-positivistic paradigms" (Xiao & Smith, 2006, p. 503) and accusations of a theoretical and critical deficit in the field remain valid (Page, 2005).

There is now a sizeable body of such "scholarship on the scholarship" of tourism knowledge, which can be ordered into five categories: journal ratings, rankings and citation analyses; source knowledge and seminal writings; collaboration/network mapping; journal editor contemplations; examinations

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