

Gender In Marketing

Shelagh Mooney
Auckland University of Technology
shelagh.mooney@aut.ac.nz

Irina Gewinner
University of Luxembourg & Leibniz Universität Hannover
Irina.gewinner@uni.lu

Keywords: gender, tourism marketing, intersectionality, entrepreneurship

Gender marketing appears straightforward as it targets one specific sex, but how to effectively research *gender* in *tourism marketing* is complex and multifaceted. Marketing is “the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (Brunswick, 2014, p. 111), however, tourism marketing is required to promote an enormous variety of destinations and experiences, across different subsectors, including transport, accommodation and hospitality. Although cultural, legal and societal contexts all influence gender, the enduring focus on market segmentation means that gender in tourism marketing frequently does not reflect more enlightened worldviews. Tourism marketers commonly view ‘gender’ as synonymous with ‘female’. Homemaker or sexualised stereotypes devalue women’s economic power as principal holiday destination decision-makers, and their influential roles as tourism policy makers, entrepreneurs, or executives. More recently, researchers have turned attention to ways that tourism marketing portrays men as one homogenous heterosexual group, neglecting LGBTQ identities (Vizcaino-Suárez & Díaz-Carrión 2018). Advertisements for family resorts rarely feature solo or gay fathers. Therefore, how to embed contemporary meanings of gender into marketing studies is challenging. Newer theories can help us to incorporate gender in marketing in ways that are more useful for diverse tourism stakeholders: the consumers, tourism businesses and researchers.

Due to the impermanent and intangible nature of tourism, the most obvious stakeholders of gender in marketing are individuals who are affected – positively or negatively – by understandings of gender in marketing. For instance, disabled women might be entirely excluded from marketing agenda due to the lack of accessible tourism offers and services, or LGBTQ people feel disadvantaged if hegemonic marketing actions merely address heteronormative couples with children. Likewise, Muslim, and non-Muslim women might have different preferences with regard to accommodation, but similar purchase behaviour (Gewinner 2021). Further involved individuals are the scholars who create and disseminate knowledge on marketing, and particularly gender discourses in marketing actions.

Another example of stakeholders of gender in marketing are *tourism agencies and destination marketing organisations*. They have a significant ability to influence – positively or negatively – the ways different destinations are promoted and perceived by consumers, and generate brand awareness and attract customers. Taking gender into account while designing and implementing various marketing actions might greatly impact on the inclusiveness of travel offers and profitability of tourism business. Lastly, on the macro level, the whole of *society* can be viewed as a stakeholder directly affected by how gender is understood and treated in marketing. Since the tourism industry accounts for 10% of global GDP, the profile of travellers and tourism practices can greatly shape gender equality, advance women’s empowerment, and reduce inequalities between the Global North and the Global South.

Place Figure 1 here. Stakeholders of gender in marketing

Much market research portrays gender as biological 'static' differences, founded on the behavioural sciences. Gender is represented as the (differing) biological characteristics of males and females, as in sex role theories. *Masculinity* and *femininity* are considered to be stable and oppositional traits, expressed as discrete variables in market research - a more desirable contemporary approach is to reflect that gender, like culture, is socially constructed and dynamic (Mooney, 2020). Gendered behaviours change according to social and cultural expectations of those performing gender and those observing. Tourism marketers and advertisers act as important cultural intermediaries, yet Grau and Zotos (2016) observe that decisions about gender portrayals receive scant attention, for example, the reasoning behind why male stereotypes are featured more frequently in humorous advertisements and vice-versa for women. Younger generational cohorts in most Western societies express gender in gender-fluid and non-binary ways, and media consumption platforms such as Netflix and the social media platforms adopted by Generation X and Z digital natives need to express a range of gendered identities and sexualities beyond mere heterosexual idealisations.

Tourism marketing researchers would also benefit from using contemporary research approaches, for example, intersectional theory that has been adopted in areas like health. Gender can be researched in isolation; however, increasingly, in tourism marketing, it is evident that how gender combines with other identity dimensions, such as age, can cause different effects on the perceptions and experiences of different groups. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) originated the idea of 'intersectionality' during the civil rights struggles in the United States. She argued that individuals belonging to a group with more than one identity classification (in this case Black Women) had experienced employment discrimination in unique ways not experienced by White Women or Black Men, and formed a legally differentiated 'intersectional' group. *Positional* intersectionality, i.e. position of individuals in the overall structure of inequality, is now a tool capable of tracking intra/ intergroup differences in groups usually regarded as one homogeneous group of women or men. In this way, the diversity in LGBT communities, rarely reflected in marketing campaigns, can recognise multiple interactions of gender/sexuality, youth/ageing, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity to improve the effective reach of destination or experience marketing. *Processual* intersectionality can furthermore help analyse how intersectional relations evolve through structural, institutional, and cultural change. In that way, it is possible to observe whether and how these relations are reconfigured, differentiated or even reduced. The latter approach requires a dynamic consideration, i.e. changes in time.

Much of marketing research draws upon homogeneous views within a society and therefore, often regards women as providers of tourism services. In explaining why people engage with entrepreneurship, the so-far influential research neglects gender and barely accounts for further substantial factors, such as access to financial capital, social networks and potential differences rooted in culture. Due to heterogeneity of legal contexts, resources, and individual characteristics, not all women are equally disadvantaged in the labour markets. For instance,

highly skilled migrant women can convert their skills in new environments and generate new business ideas in the tourism sector. This insight urges a more differentiated view on entrepreneurship, including measures to empower women and support them as tourism service producers. In that way, marketers should confront its existing multiple gender biases in order to enhance a more open and inclusive society.

To counteract uniform views on gender in marketing and provide more detailed knowledge to help facilitate gender equality, integrative and complementary actions are needed. The first is sensitisation of multiple actors engaged in marketing. This implies not only increasing awareness of knowledge producers, such as researchers and journal editors, but also communicating research results to the broader public. The challenge for science communication also extends to implementing research insights into practice. It applies not only to the tourism industry in general, represented by travel agencies and destination marketing organisations, but also to tourism influencers as well as print outlets and online platforms for marketing communications.

The previous overview highlights major gaps in gender in tourism marketing knowledge. There are rich opportunities in future marketing studies to move beyond the time-bound and frequently traditional consumer behaviour perspective of most tourism gender studies- only the investigation of the key dimensions of place and space will enable diverse stakeholders to understand “the underlying reasons for different consumer behaviors” (Xu, 2018, p. 725) in order to plan advertising campaigns accordingly. Marketing researchers need to use gender models that accurately reflect the needs of today’s women as unique differing groups of consumers and entrepreneurs in tourism. Technological advances have created new ways of “interactive and dynamic consumption based on co-creation between consumer and producer but also between peer-to-peer interaction that is only possible in the digital era where everybody is consumer and producer of information” (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015, p. 159). Therefore, to come of age, tourism marketing must now respond to the social justice goals of tourism development agencies and the values of modern social enterprises by highlighting issues such as the trafficking of young girls and women promoted by sex tourism in developing countries.

References

- Brunswick, G. (2014). A chronology of the definition of marketing. *Journal of Business & Economics Research (JBER)*, 12(2), 105. <https://doi.org/10.19030/jber.v12i2.8523>
- Buhalis, D., & Foerste, M. (2015). SoCoMo marketing for travel and tourism: Empowering co-creation of value. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 4(3), 151–161. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2015.04.001>
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, Article 8.
- Gewinner, I. (2021). Women in tourism in Muslim contexts: The impact of cultural background on customer behaviour, in Slak Valek, N. & Almuhri, H. (Eds.) *Women in Tourism in Asian Muslim Countries*, Springer.

- Grau, S. L., & Zotos, Y. C. (2016). Gender stereotypes in advertising: a review of current research. *International Journal of Advertising*, 35(5), 761-770.
- Mooney, S. (2020). Gender research in hospitality and tourism management: Time to change the guard. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32(5), 1861–1879. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-09-2019-0780>
- Vizcaino-Suárez, L., & Díaz-Carrión, I. (2018). Gender in tourism research: Perspectives from Latin America. *Tourism Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-02-2017-0021>
- Xu, H. (2018). Moving toward gender and tourism geographies studies. *Tourism Geographies*, 20(4), 721–727. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2018.1486878>